

THE DISCERNED CHOICE FOR EAST ASIAN CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY:
KOREAN APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation argues that discerned choice, originated from Western Christian spiritual work, Spiritual Exercises composed by Ignatius of Loyola, can be authentic and transformative by integrating and synthesizing with culturally unique components embedded historically in the lived experiences of East Asian Christian context. It attempts to demonstrate that certain cultural features of the East Asian context such as collectivism, the interdependent self, the holistic mode of thinking, and the Neo-Confucian concept of self-cultivation and sagehood significantly influence the Christian process of discernment. This research is an exploratory attempt to integrate in an interactive and complementary way the Western spirituality of discerned choice with the culturally unique characteristics of East Asian Christians. The comprehensive consideration of the cultural components will describe the discerned choice as Holistic, as Simultaneous and Spontaneous, as Process and as Communal by employing two theoretical methods, Experience Circle and Social Discernment Cycle. The seven steps procedure is presented as practical implication and methods for the discerned choice for East Asian Christian spiritual formation. It will demonstrate in detail how a discerned choice as part of Christian spiritual formation can be appropriately embodied in the integrating and complementary dynamics between the discernment process and culturally significant characteristics.

To my parents
who have been an overflowing fountain for my spirituality,
Sangeun Lee (1941 – 1987)
and Younghee Song (1946 -)

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Introduction

Scope and Nature of the Study

Christian spirituality as an academic discipline researches the lived experience according to the Christian faith.¹ One of the primary goals in this academic field is to renew and transform spiritual formation by encouraging Christians to connect with or to deepen their spiritual awareness of the divine presence and the Holy Spirit so as to live out their faith through all aspects of their lived experiences. This implies a comprehensible and holistic approach to human lives and proposes to integrate faith with the individual moments of life. The genuine embodiment of a person's relationship with God, that is, the incarnation of their Christian faith in life experiences, is the primary aim of spiritual formation. In order to do so, spiritual practices are essential.

The fundamental questions of this research originated in my uneasy awareness of the discrepancy between individuals' Christian faith and the lives that they lead. When I was growing up, having made a commitment to the church and to the spiritual life in a small suburban church of Seoul, South Korea, the most serious problems I perceived stemmed from the lack of coherence or even the disintegration among the various aspects of the Christian life. On the intrapersonal level, my faith confession and a uniquely given talent led me to discover my life vocation. But, on the interpersonal level, my accountability and responsibility within the family or collective system in South Korea took priority at a young age. Interpersonal relationships within my faith community are shaped more by culturally or socially preconditioned dynamics such as a hierarchical structure than by practicing the core teachings of the gospel. Rather than making an effort to discern the possibilities for specialized ministries

¹ Sandra M Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," in *The Blackwell*

grounded in the social context, the church ministry and programs have become more homogeneous with those of popular nearby churches. These observations have convinced me that one solution to these perceived problems could be not only that individuals employ Christian spiritual discernment but also that they seek to embody their faith by making appropriate choices or decisions in the everyday moments of life.

Context of Choice

Our choices shape our lives. The human being is destined to face options in the life journey and to respond to them by taking this, accepting that; letting go of this, holding on to that; doing this rather than that; omitting or refusing to do one thing in favor of a better option. It is our choice how we respond, and our choices shape our individual lives. The choice-making process inevitably requires weighing the value of the options and determining which option is more valuable or meaningful. And the choice that is made after the weighing of possibilities can be considered the expected outcome of the value system that the choice-maker relies on. Depending upon which options are chosen, the value system of the person is unveiled. The premise is thus that a choice made in a given situation represents the best option, one that embeds higher value than other choices. Each choice shapes our current lives.

Scholars in various academic disciplines and professionals in the business world have addressed the significance of choice making in people's lives. Barry Schwartz describes the paradox of choice by interweaving social science with economic management perspectives, explaining why having too many options has proved detrimental to our psychological and emotional well-being. He asserts that eliminating choices can reduce the stress, anxiety, and busyness of our lives, and he notes that the fewer options we have, the more satisfied we may

feel.² Meanwhile, Sheena Iyengar bases her remarkable work on the premise that choice making reflects the innate desire of human beings to control the environment.³ Her socio-psychological research backs up her assertion that the ability to choose well is arguably the most powerful tool humans have for controlling our environment. So, she associates the human ability to make choices with the desire to have control over our circumstance and surroundings.

Christian Choice Perceived

With respect to the significance of choice-making, are the data from the academic disciplines readily applicable to the choices made by Christians? How about life-changing choices such as those related to marriage or occupation? If the choices made by Christians can be differentiated from other choices, what are the distinctive characteristics? When a Christian faces a decision or choice, he or she evaluates the options according to Christian values. The choice made in the context of a spiritual practice in the Christian tradition asks the chooser to discern the highest value in his or her relationship with God in a given context. The choice can thus be regarded as an appropriate instrument that integrates what one values most highly with what one responds to in reality.

Given this, what about the choices made by Christians in general? When a Christian faces a decision or choice, he or she chooses the option most highly evaluated according to Christian values. The choice made through spiritual practice in the Christian tradition asks the Christian to discern the choice that has the highest value in the relationship with God in a given context. The choice can be regarded as an appropriate instrument to integrate what one values most highly

² Barry Schwartz, *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2004).

³ Sheena Iyengar, *The Art of Choosing* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2010).

with what one responds to in reality. However, choice making is generally not utilized today for embodying one's beliefs or integrating or synthesizing Christian values or personal beliefs in a particular cultural context. Rather, making a choice often leads to distorting or fragmenting the person's belief system or their spiritual relationship with God.

Spirituality and Choice

This research has as its theoretical foundation the concept from Ignatian spirituality that the ultimate goal of spiritual practice is to make a choice or decision in accord with one's lifelong vocation, a choice that is discovered to be the will of God.⁴ The comprehensive prayer methods employed by the *Spiritual Exercises* are designed to help practitioners or directees to seek, find, and follow God's will for them as individuals. The process of discerning the will of God demands that those participating in the spiritual practices reorient their lives, and as a result they discover their lifelong vocation in accord with the will of God. If the process is authentic, the act of making a choice becomes a critical vehicle for embodying God's will in one's individual life as well as for exploring and discovering one's vocation in a unique way so as to integrate one's faith confession with the ongoing moments of life and thus to live out one's faith confession in every aspect of life.

A practitioner of spiritual practices or a directee in spiritual direction is led to make small or large choices or decisions that correspond ultimately to his or her life vocation. The person learns to acknowledge through the spiritual practices that making authentic choices is intimately

⁴ Representative literature related to this interpretive perspective on Ignatian spirituality is as follows: John J. English, *Spiritual Freedom: From an Experience of the Ignatian Exercises to the Art of Spiritual Guidance*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1995); Elizabeth Liebert, *The Way of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision Making*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008); David Lonsdale, *Listening to the Music of the Spirit: The Art of Discernment* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1993); Javier Melloni, *The Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2000).

interconnected with discovering his or her vocation. In the Ignatian sense, any decision or choice must be in accord with the ultimate purpose of each human being. Therefore, a person on retreat or in spiritual direction recognizes that the authentic choice, which entails seeking, finding, and following God's will, is intimately connected to discovering his or her lifelong vocation and making large and small choices through the process described in the *Spiritual Exercises*.

Doing a comprehensive or holistic survey of one's lived experiences implies a serious consideration of the context of one's experiences. The nature of this lived experience is influenced extensively by context and culture, since no human activity happens in the absence of context. Thus, no choice making occurs without a context. Even though a choice could be formulated mainly within the intrapersonal and spiritual spheres, Christian choice is impossible to make outside of the choice-maker's cultural context. In addition, the field of Christian spirituality pursues a holistic approach to human lived experiences (integrating the areas of intra- and interpersonal, social/structural, and nature), which means that Christian choice should be accounted for in an interactive dynamic within the cultural context.

Despite the significance of this topic to spiritual formation, hardly any literature can be found that addresses this subject. This situation leads me to ask the following questions. What are the appropriate forms and characteristics for making choices for enhancing the spiritual lives of East Asian Christians? How can East Asian cultural traits be applied in the discernment process or in a discerned choice related to Christian spirituality? In what ways can the Christian discerned choice facilitate the integration of East Asian cultural features as they relate to spiritual life with the faith that is confessed? How can a discerned choice play a critical role in cultivating or nurturing Christian spirituality in the East Asian context?

This study considers spiritual directors or supervisors in the Christian spiritual direction

context and Christian spiritual practitioners who are working with and influenced by an East Asian cultural context as the primary readers. The scope of this research is limited to the East Asian context because the disciplines of sociocultural psychology and Neo-Confucianism present analytic data demonstrating the homogenous features of the social, cultural, and historical contexts within the East Asian countries of China, Korea, and Japan.

In this project, I argue that certain cultural features of the East Asian context such as collectivism, the interdependent self, the holistic mode of thinking, and the Neo-Confucian concept of self-cultivation and sagehood significantly influence the Christian process of discernment. I argue that discerned choice, originated from Western spiritual work, *Spiritual Exercises* composed by Ignatius of Loyola, can be authentic and transformative by integrating and synthesizing with culturally unique components embedded historically in the lived experiences of East Asian Christian context. This research is an exploratory attempt to integrate in an interactive and complementary way the Western spirituality of discerned choice with the culturally unique characteristics of East Asian Christians. The comprehensive consideration of the cultural components will describe the discerned choice as Holistic, as Simultaneous and Spontaneous, as Process and as Communal by employing two theoretical methods, Experience Circle and Social Discernment Cycle. I will demonstrate in detail how a discerned choice as part of spiritual formation can be appropriately embodied in the integrating and complementary dynamics between the discernment process and culturally significant characteristics.

Contexts of the Study

Christian Discernment

Seeking and discerning the will of God is one of the main spiritual tasks in the Christian

life. Its significance has been emphasized in the biblical and historical tradition within the Christian community since determining how we can live out our faith thoughtfully and faithfully is closely associated with how we discern the will of God in our whole lived experience as human beings.⁵ Commenting on the critical awareness of discernment within the Jerusalem church as revealed in the biblical account of Acts 15, Luke Timothy Johnson defines discernment as “that habit of faith by which we are properly disposed to hear God’s Word and properly disposed to respond to the Word in the practical circumstances of our lives.”⁶ It is not an exaggeration to note that the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola has been recognized as the foremost work on the integration and synthesis of spiritual discernment in Christian history. Broadly known as the most relevant commentator about the “Spiritual Exercises,” Michael Ivens mention, “Discernment is a function of the wisdom of the Spirit. It can be broadly defined as the wisdom which enables a person to distinguish by inner sense between the spiritually authentic and its opposite, between what is and is not of the Spirit. . . But more fundamentally, discernment as a gift of the Spirit needs specifically spiritual qualities.”⁷

There has been significant interest in the topic of discernment over the last three decades of Christian scholarship. Sandra Schneiders describes discernment as “transformation by faith of one's intelligence, imagination, and intuition enabling one to interpret correctly and respond

⁵ More information concerning the biblical and historical foundation of discernment may be found in Liebert, *Way of Discernment*, 10–19; Joseph T. Lienhard, "On 'Discernment of Spirits' in the Early Church," *Theological Studies* 41, no. 3 (1980): 505-529; Jacques Guillet, Gustave Bardy, Francois Vandenbroucke, Joseph Pegon, and Henri Martin, *Discernment of Spirits*, trans. Innocentia Richards (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1970).

⁶ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Scripture and Discernment: Decision-Making in the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 110.

⁷ Michael Ivens and Ignatius, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary: A Handbook for Retreat Directors* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 205.

rightly to God's revelatory initiative in all the areas of one's life and to find oneself within the overall salvific scheme operating in world history."⁸ David Lonsdale notes that "discernment engages us in the dance to the music of the Spirit. It puts us in touch with the Spirit of God who is present in these changes and who through them invites us to cooperate in the creation of a world in the image of God."⁹ One of the most recent definitions is that of Elizabeth Liebert, who writes, "Discernment is the process of intentionally becoming aware of how God is present, active and calling us as individuals and communities so that we can respond with increasingly greater faithfulness."¹⁰

From an etymological perspective, discernment signifies to "discriminate or distinguish from," which reveals its original meaning—to distinguish what is of God from all else or to distinguish between good and evil impulses. Joseph Lienhard elucidates the original biblical sense of discernment and how it was later extensively developed with a slightly different nuance by the early church fathers.¹¹ In addition, Mark A. McIntosh's historical survey presents four connotations of the term: discernment as grounded in living Trust in God; as discretion and practical wisdom; as seeking the truth of God's will; and as the contemplation of wisdom.¹² These various traditions have constructively shaped the common contemporary understanding of discernment, such as "discerning prophetic speech" in a particular context, "discerning how God is or has been at work in an activity or time period," or "discerning a choice between two good

⁸ Sandra M. Schneiders, "Spiritual Discernment in the Dialogue of Saint Catherine of Siena," *Horizons* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1982), 48–49.

⁹ Lonsdale, *Listening to the Music of the Spirit*, 29.

¹⁰ Liebert, *the Way of Discernment*, 8.

¹¹ Lienhard, "On 'Discernment of Spirits' in the Early Church,"

¹² For details, Mark A. McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth: The Spirituality and Theology of Knowledge* (New York: Herder & Herder Book, 2004), 5–21.

options.”

The above biblical and historical definitions elaborate different aspects of Christian discernment that arises from habits of faith, spiritual wisdom and gifts, interpretation of the divine revelation, cooperative participation in the divine presence, and the process of intentional awareness. Each concept, however, is grounded in the way human beings are asked for a faithful response to God’s call as revealed in Jesus Christ and to incarnate it with the Spirit in all aspects of life. Discernment primarily presupposes that the human being is called by God in the salvation revealed in Jesus Christ and is asked to engage with the present creative workings of the Holy Spirit. Based on the above discussion, this research defines discernment as a spiritual or contemplative process and holistic response of individuals and communities to the call from God to embody and engage with the will of God in every aspect of life.

This conceptualization of discernment highlights the significance of its role in spiritual formation since the way we understand the divine will shapes, reshapes, configures, nurtures, nourishes, renews, and transforms our spiritual formation. The embodiment of the individual discerning process is manifested in the practical action or response of the choice-making. It has a substantial influence upon the various and critical moments of choice and decision in our lives, ranging from choosing a lifetime partner, to school and occupation, to religious vocation. As part of spiritual formation, discernment must be facilitated in the spiritual decision or choice-making process so that it results in nourishing, cultivating, and transforming the human being according to the Christian faith.

Discernment cannot be underestimated as a spiritual discipline as well as an integral part of spiritual formation. It is a spiritual discipline in that when one is oriented to or trained in a Christian tradition of discernment, one’s spiritual life may experience nourishment and

transformation, which readily affects one's spiritual formation. This is the primary reason the discipline must be entailed with certain form of spiritual practices. The practices prompt practitioners to internalize and incorporate them into their own spiritual spheres. Then, inner knowledge or internal information is created by those practices. Information once considered as the second hand is now transfigured into the first hand knowledge. The importance of the practice in the spiritual disciplines and formation can succinctly be explained that the practices change the epistemological knowledge and information into the ontological ones.¹³ Information and data absorbed simply by the cognitive form can penetratingly be permeated into the intuitive and affective levels so that it plays crucial role in initiating and stimulating reshape, renew and transformation of the core of the spiritual life. This indicates high plausibility that anyone equipped with well-fledged wings of the disciplines of the discernment can enhance and transform one's spiritual formation and lives.

At this point, we must be reminded that discernment is a process and response. What kinds of practical or specific form of the human engagement and activity will be? It is explicitly a choice making. When faced with a particularly important choice or decision, Christian discernment is often taken to mean only those processes of careful, prayerful deliberation that we undertake to response. Enumerating the several definitions, Liebert also features that discernment implies "making a discriminating choice between two or more good options, seeking the best for this moment. These choice, while personal and conditional, are set within the community of faith and honor our previous well-made decision."¹⁴ And consequently, she makes the critical point that the ultimate goal of discernment is not "absolute certainty, but rather

¹³ The crucial role of the practice in the Christian spirituality is well elucidated in Elizabeth Liebert, "Practice," in *Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur G. Holder (Oxford ; Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2005), 496–514.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Liebert, *The Way of Discernment*, 8.

operate in climate of faith.” The Goal of discernment therefore is to refine the acoustics of our spirit so that we can be more closely united to God in obedient faith. To live with a "discerning heart" is to believe that God is to be found everywhere in the holy ground of our existence. As a process, discernment is decision making that invites God into the process and relies on God to be the telling influence in the choices we make.

The Challenge of the Postmodern World

One of the most challenging dilemmas for the Christian faith community is how to live within the postmodern world. Borrowing Finnegan’s concept, Liebert remarks that the postmodern world has changed our philosophical and cultural soils into a place where there exists no independent reality, no metanarratives, no objective truth, where everything is fragmentary, superficial, individualistic and subjective, and where no unified subject exists.¹⁵ The postmodern world is threatening to the existing fundamental on which the whole spectrum of the Christian faith is standing.

Even though the postmodern world shakes the solid foundations of the Christian faith tradition, there is the paradoxical fact that it is also creating a new milieu where spiritual discernment can be broadly and usefully utilized. That is, by dismissing grand schemes and huge institutional responses, the postmodern world makes it possible to encourage small, tactical, pragmatic, incremental, dialogical, and consensus-based action. Each individual does not have to rely upon a grand theology or theoretical orientation for seeking and discerning the will of God. Rather, each individual can undertake his or her practice of discernment in the given situation and context. That is, each individual life is being authored in the act of deciding and choosing.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Liebert, "Discernment for Our Times: A Practice with Postmodern Implications," *Studies in Spirituality* 18 (2008), 337.

This sheds light upon the necessity and usefulness of discernment in spiritual formation and spiritual discipline in particular contexts.

What are the theological premises or presuppositions that support an individual practice of discernment? This research is based on the core presupposition that discernment is in the context of the spiritual practice and discipline rather than the context of theoretical reconstruction.¹⁶ Here I rely heavily on the Ignatian tradition, which is considered as the historical basis of the ongoing effort to synthesize and structure the discernment tradition. Within the Ignatian tradition, we can explore several characteristics of discernment that are broadly applicable to the postmodern or multicultural world.¹⁷ First, discernment has a crucial role in human action in the divine grace—the mysterious economy of God’s plan. We are called to choose to respond to what God is doing. Second, God is revealed in all creatures. That God is present in all enables us to acknowledge all things as the object or context of our discernment. All things perceived and acknowledged in our prayer and reflections can become the salient, important material we use for discerning the movement of God in this world.

Third, discernment requires us to find out the divine will in the concrete situation. Rather than engaging with theological or epistemological exploration, it invites us to discern the present moment and the ground we stand on, and its fruit should pass into another moment calling for a new discernment. Fourth, the primary goal of discernment is to grow and enhance our intimate relationship with God. Our true identity within the relationship stems from *imago dei*, implying that we discover our true self as “we reach out and attend to world around us, interacting with it

¹⁶ One of the best resources for discovering the theological construction of discernment is McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth*.

¹⁷ Liebert, "Discernment for Our Times," 340–343.

as thoughtfully and gracefully as we can, moment by moment.”¹⁸

Fifth, discernment does not strive for absolute certainty. Even though our discernment process may be made with limited certainty, our faith context has us note God is already present and working in the context. The discernment here is to join with God in that work. This further implies that all discernment processes and outcomes are positive, but some struggle, agony, discontent, and negative involvement are part of the process. The fact that God is working out of God’s love for all creation allows Christian discernment to remain as inevitable uncertainty in the human sphere and its fruits to be tentative and provisional. Last, although the outcomes of discernment are considered preliminary, the discernment tradition does present four criteria for evaluating the choice: Scripture, the Christian tradition, consultation with a wise discernor, and increasing consolation and decreasing desolation. In the Ignatius model, however, the most desirable fruits of discernment, which is considered confirmation, are increasing our trust in God’s providence and gaining the freedom to go wherever we are led.

The contemporary exploration of Christian discernment in the postmodern or multicultural world prompts a critical question: Is the process of spiritual discernment as executed or guided in the Western context able to be directly adopted into the non-Western Christian spiritual context? If not, what sort of guidelines or direction should be offered in different cultural contexts? If non-Western Christians request acculturated direction or guidelines in their own context, what cultural aspects can or should be embedded in their discernment or choice-making?

Descriptions of Christian Choice-Making

As the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* suggest, the choice-making process may become an

¹⁸ Ibid., 342.

opportunity to enhance and cultivate one's spiritual growth and renewal.¹⁹ However, choice-making is generally not utilized today for embodying one's beliefs or integrating or synthesizing Christian value or personal beliefs in a particular cultural context. Rather, making a choice often leads to distorting or fragmenting the person's belief system or their spiritual relationship with God. Here are several examples of Christians facing a critical moment of choice, but the choices they made were rarely used for integration.

I had a spiritual direction session with Sung-dong, a male college student in Korea, who shares his personal agony about his family's objections to his vocational goal. He is convinced that God has called him to be a Christian minister, and he has begun to plan to enter a theological seminary. His family's objections, however, have blocked him from making this vocational choice. The objection of his father, a Confucian observant, rests heavily upon his mind since he does not want to violate filial piety, a Confucian value his father regards highly. The father also maintains the Confucian conviction that his first and only son, Sung-dong, should remain in the family religion and business. Sung-dong believes that his divine calling should harmonize and make peace among family members. He is concerned, therefore, that the strong reaction to his sense of vocation could create tension and conflict within the family. His vocational choice has encountered a conflict between his own personal conviction and his family.

Eun-ji, a late-twenties Korean female, regrets her choice to have an inappropriate relationship with a man, since her long-time relationship with him has led to her unexpected pregnancy. The boyfriend keeps urging her to have an abortion because he has not considered being married to her. Eun-ji's Christian belief, however, teaches her that the embryo is a life created by God that must be preserved and appreciated. She anguishes over the possibility that

¹⁹ Ignatius and George E. Ganss, *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), nos. 313–336.

she might raise the baby by herself without any paternal presence and support. Most of all, her parents and other family members are pushing her to have an abortion because having a baby while single would bring communal shame to her family, undermining the social status of her mother and father. She is also concerned about the social reaction to her, since it is shameful for a young female to give birth to and raise a baby alone in her town and society. So, it is evident that she will be isolated or separated from all the relationships she has engaged with.

Rev. Jung-Ku Kim has seriously considered resigning the senior pastor position from the church where he has devoted himself for the last ten years due to frustration and exhaustion perceived. His devoted commitment to the church seems not to be appreciated become nullified by the church member. Any effort to revive the church based upon his conviction proved unsuccessful and productive. But, he has not made any decision and choice since he is not clear when he should announce his plans and what the best way and timing his leave without harming the church.

A session of a Korean Presbyterian church located in bay area has undergone the conflict between the members of the session. Whereas a group standing for the senior pastor contends the primary role of the session is to support the pastoral ministry and main programs such as spiritual revival, the other part maintains the lack of thoughtful consideration of the current financial situation will deteriorate and overweigh the burden of the church members. In the midst of the unresolved tension among session members and the lay people, the harmony of the church has getting worsen, the spiritual leadership of the church has struggled with discovering prudent or wise agenda for their communal choice or decision bringing potentially out the restoration of the communal sense of the belongings.

In the social dimension, there is unprecedented, fervent debates and criticism within

Korean Christian churches and the media because several mega-churches have made the decision to elect the sons of the senior pastors as the successors to the fathers. While the churches claim this is valid from a biblical perspective, others criticize the churches for illegitimately attempting to keep ecclesiastic initiatives and social influence in the hands of a few key figures. Regrettably, the churches' choice seems to undermine their social credibility in Korean society by tarnishing an essential Christian belief and disregarding social integration, one of the primary functions of church in society.

Having engaged in various spiritual practices in the Christian tradition and practicing spiritual direction in the Western cultural context over the last decade, I am clear that the choices described above, and the accompanying discernment process, is heavily reliant upon or formulated by cultural aspects of the East Asian context that are seldom perceived in Western colleagues. My different cultural background and experiences leads me to seek the will of God in a different track or with different perceptions. For instance, when I am giving the spiritual direction, I note that a multi-religious situation within a family generates interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts and tension. In the case of Sung-dong, his father disallows him to become a Christian minister based on his own Confucian worldview and conviction. Eun-ji's Christian parents make the choice to persuade her that abortion is the best option for her future and the family's, based mainly upon their shame sensibility.

These occasions tell us that *the existing choice pattern is inappropriate, not only because of the absence of the discernment discipline, but also because of the overlooking of the cultural aspects of the context*. Neither becomes it integrating tactic by embodying the faith within the real life context, nor could it be a spiritual strategy to cultivate and renew the intimate relationship with God. The spiritual discipline of the discernment is prioritized in the choice-

making context. Then, it should be recognized that the cultural elements or components plays implicitly in critical role in discerning the wills of God or the following choices in a certain context. In the discerning progress, the culturally unique components such as the Confucian ideology, family-oriented society, honor and shame culture, and “age before honest,” function as the significant resources to perceive or figure out the wills of God.

The awareness of the significance of cultural sensibility is increasing among scholars and practitioners of spiritual direction. Susan Rakoczy observes that despite the common journey within the same spiritual exercises, the fruits and outcomes the participants bear vary depending on the cultural context, and it is no different in choice-making and decision-making.²⁰ Kanghak Lee also points to the significance of culture in his recent dissertation, stating that it is critical for the spiritual director to be aware of the Confucian culture of Korean directees in the spiritual direction session.²¹ Despite this literature, this study acknowledges that there has been insufficient study of cultural sensibility in the spiritual practices, including in discernment and choice, even though more Christians are seeking spiritual practices and direction in the Korean or East Asian context.²² This research is an initial endeavor and experimental inquiry concerning the discerned choices of East Asian Christians who are engaged in interactive and complementary dynamics with culturally unique characteristics.

²⁰ Susan Rakoczy, "Unity, Diversity, and Uniqueness: Foundations of Cross-Cultural Spiritual Direction," in *Common Journey, Different Paths: Spiritual Direction in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Susan Rakoczy (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992), 9–23.

²¹ Kanghak Lee, “Confucian Direction for a Confucian Culture: Korean Perspective” (PhD diss., Graduate Theological Union, 2008).

²² It is a cultural phenomenon that more Korean people are seeking spiritual programs and that the *Spiritual Exercises* are practiced in various contexts in Korea. While the pursuit of spiritual practices has noticeably increased the last decades, well-articulated guidelines or directions have not been sufficiently produced among the Christian spirituality scholars in the Korean context.

Methodology of the Pastoral Circle

Practical theology engages personal, ecclesial, and social experience to discern the meaning of God's presence and enable faithful human response.²³ It asks what it means to practice theology and to live one's faith in the here and now. It is a "doing" or "practicing" of theology that takes the changing embodiment of faith in time and space seriously. This research utilizes the Pastoral Circle to construct the thesis argument in the framework of practical theology. Given this framework, the Pastoral Circle as academic research method leads to an examination of the Christian faith in the observed context. Originally modified from social analysis method and reformulated by social sensitivity to spiritual practices and formation, the Pastoral Circle takes includes the following steps: description of the current situation, social analysis, theological reflection, and pastoral response. Investigating the historical background and theoretical background of the Pastoral Circle will be helpful in understanding the methodology.

Historical and Theoretical Origins

The Pastoral Circle had its origins in a book entitled *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*, authored by Joe Holland and Peter Henriot in 1980. When they were engaged in a regional program related to the issue of hunger as staff of the Center of Concern in Washington, D.C., they became convinced that the awareness of social justice issues should be increased within their context. They eventually decided to write a working paper about resolving social justice issues within capitalistic civilization to and integrate it with the pastoral and ministerial

²³ Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987).

context; in this way, they devised the Pastoral Circle.²⁴

Joe Holland notes that the theoretical foundation of the Pastoral Circle is based on three Catholic social traditions.²⁵ The first resource is obviously Latin American liberation theology. The second is the older “see, judge, act” tradition of the modern lay Catholic Action movement, and the third is the praxis model (*phronesis*) of Aristotelian thought. Holland describes how the Latin American liberation theology grew out of the earlier European lay Catholic Action movement and intellectually facilitated its methodology of “see, judge, act.”²⁶ Within the framework of these three steps, liberation theology established its theoretical foundation.²⁷ At the moment of “seeing,” liberation theology was equipped with a radically prophetic social analysis in their unjust context. At the moment of “judging,” liberation theology shifted its biblical and theological perspective from the David tradition into the Mosaic, since while the former sees the social structure as legitimate and not open to fundamental or systemic prophetic critique, the latter stands as the liberator of oppressed Jewish slaves. Viewing from the Mosaic stance grounds liberation theology in the prophetic critique of the structural captivity of the poor and oppressed. At the moment of “acting,” liberation theology makes a considerable contribution to embodying systemic and practical transformation of the social context.

The Aristotelian understanding of *phronesis* is named as the third source of the Pastoral

²⁴ Joe Holland and Peter J. Henriot, *Social Analysis : Linking Faith and Justice*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983), 1; Frans Jozef Servaas Wijzen, Peter J. Henriot, and Rodrigo Mejia, *The Pastoral Circle Revisited : A Critical Quest for Truth and Transformation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2005), xix.

²⁵ Joe Holland, "Introduction: Roots of the Pastoral Circle in Personal Experiences and Catholic Social Transformation," in *The Pastoral Circle Revisited : A Critical Quest for Truth and Transformation*, ed. Frans Jozef Servaas Wijzen, Peter J. Henriot, and Rodrigo Mejia (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2005), 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 6–9.

Circle.²⁸ Its origin goes back to thirteenth-century Europe, when Thomas Aquinas began appropriating the philosophy of Aristotle in Western Christian civilization. Before that time, owing to a brilliant Platonist theologian, Augustine of Hippo, the Neo-Platonic influence was had dominated the theological enterprise and catholic church. The two philosophical approaches took different routes in understanding reality and investigating truth. For instance, Platonic scholars did not pursue the truth in the sensual, material world, but rather counted upon the rationalist intuition of abstract intellectual ideas, usually translated as “form.”

Aristotelian scholars regard the material world perceived through the human senses as the only source of concrete knowledge. The search for abstract truth thus should be rooted in the concrete knowledge of the real world. Here, Aristotle’s concept of *phronesis* (prudence or practical reason) is taken seriously as a philosophical and theoretical source of the Pastoral Circle. This is a type of intelligence or wisdom that contrasts with epistemological knowledge. While the latter is characterized as theoretical reason and involves the pursuit of scientific knowledge of general truths, the former is significant in Aristotle’s ethics since *phronesis* is the virtue of practical wisdom generated by direct practice and experiences in the individual context. Based upon this emphasis on practical wisdom, the Aristotelian tradition developed three methodological elements: “(1) rational-empirical study of reality; (2) articulation of general moral principles of right reason developed from knowledge of the reality; and (3) prudential recommendations on how to proceed in action according to right reason within reality.”²⁹

Methodological Structures

²⁸ Holland, "Roots of the Pastoral Circle," 10–12.

²⁹ Ibid., 11.

Given this philosophical and theological foundation, Joe Holland and Peter Henriot constructed the Pastoral Circle, which in turn forms the basis of the Social Discernment Cycle discussed in Chapter Four. There are four constitutive procedures or movement in the circle, and in the movement toward a certain direction each movement is interrelated with and interdependent on the others. The movements are: (1) insertion, (2) social analysis, (3) theological reflection, and (4) pastoral planning (see Figure 1).

Pastoral Circle

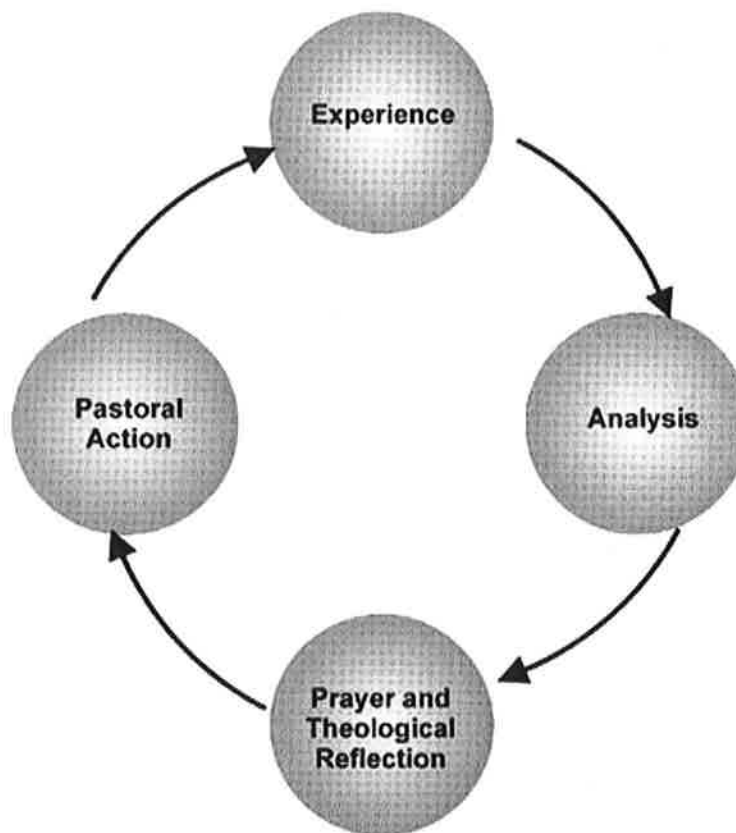


Figure 1. The Pastoral Circle³⁰

As the first movement in the circle, insertion is the initial endeavor to investigate the

³⁰ Elizabeth Liebert, "The Role of Practice in the Study of Christian Spirituality," *Minding the Spirit*, eds. Elizabeth A. Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 80-85.

lived experiences of individuals and communities in a certain context. At this stage, a couple of major questions should be asked: Where and with whom are we locating ourselves as we begin our process? Whose experience is being considered? What are people feeling, what are they undergoing, how are they responding? Are there groups that are “left out” when an experience is identified?

The information or data gained from the insertion is supposed to lead to the second moment, social analysis. This explores “causes, probes consequences, delineates linkages, and identifies the broader picture and draws the connections between them.”³¹ The following questions are related to this phase, according to Holland Henriot: “Which analytic tradition or enterprise is being followed? Are there presuppositions in these analyses that need to be tested?” What kinds of socio-analytic symptoms are perceived?³² These questions in social analysis are embedded in the premise that social problems and issues, although they may appear to be isolated pieces, are actually linked together in a larger system. Theological reflection is placed in the third movement, in which one makes an effort to comprehend broadly and deeply the analyzed experience from the viewpoint of living faith, scripture, the church’s social teachings, and the resources of the tradition. This prompts the new insights, new questions, and new responses to the situation. The key questions at this stage are, what methodological assumptions underlie the theological reflection? What relationship can be made with the social analysis, and is that complementary, substitutive or subordinate, etc? What kinds of insight related to theological ideas are revealed by the social situation?³³ Pastoral planning is located in the fourth

³¹ Holland and Henriot, *Social Analysis*, 8.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 9.

movement, during which the primary goal of the pastoral circle will be actualized or embodied by a particular decision and action. The major questions are as follows: “Given the experiences analyzed and reflected upon in the precedent procedure, what response is called for by individuals and by communities? In what ways should the response be designed? Who will participate in or initiate the pastoral decision and action? What is the practical implication of the appropriate responses?”³⁴

The most distinctive aspect of the pastoral circle is revealed in the way in which the pastoral planning and reaction prompts new experiences in the social context or pastoral situation. These experiences in turn become the fundamental sources of the insertion in the pastoral circle so that the process or procedure can take place again: insertion, social analysis, theological reflection, and pastoral planning. Thus, the pastoral circle is inherently ongoing. It goes on without final conclusion, but all outcomes are tentative since the next process does not retract the old steps but covers new ground. This is why Holland and Henriot indicate that the circle has the nature of a spiral rather than a circle, because a totally new social situation and pastoral context is perceived or observed due to the new experiences.³⁵

What are the practical implications and applications of the pastoral circle in the context of Christian discernment? Henriot comments in a recent article that Christian discernment is highly relevant to the pastoral circle, and even more, that discernment goes through a more profound and fruitful process when it is enhanced by use of the pastoral circle.³⁶ Describing examples of

³⁴ Ibid., 10.

³⁵ Ibid., 9.

³⁶ Peter J. Henriot, "Social Discernment and the Pastoral Circle," in *The Pastoral Circle Revisited: A Critical Quest for Truth and Transformation*, ed. Frans Jozef Servaas Wijzen, Peter J. Henriot, and Rodrigo Mejia (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2005), 15–26.

the pastoral situations in several Catholic churches in Africa, including in Zambia, he convincingly argues that when the discernment process in a religious community adopts the pastoral circle as its framework, the individual and communal discernment process turns out to be deeper and more transformative. Henriot's research into the application of the pastoral circle to the discernment context suggests new insights. At first, the rudimentary aim of good analysis is to discover "the why of the what—the cause of the occurrence that we have described."³⁷ It asks for careful awareness of the multi-layered structures in the context ranging from economic, political, and psychological to religious, and especially the cultural structure.³⁸ Secondly, the reflection movement must be given more prominence, especially faith-based reflection, since discernment can be authentic when a certain principle of the faith is collectively shared and becomes a resource. Therefore, "a faith-filled reading of the signs of the times is cognitive (beliefs), affective (trust), and effective (deeds)."³⁹

Sensitivity to social justice issues and its resonances have deeply and seriously awakened those engaged in spiritual direction and practice groups, as well as those engaged in scholarship. Out of this grew the concern that training programs in spiritual direction and practice might disregard the social commitment and obligation toward justice and "social holiness."⁴⁰ To respond to this communal concern, professors at San Francisco Theological Seminary experimentally employed the Pastoral Circle within the discernment process in the school's spiritual practice and direction program a couple of decades ago.

³⁷ Ibid., 25.

³⁸ See Peter Henriot, "Grassroots Analysis: The Emphasis on Culture," in *Liberation Theologies on Shifting Ground*, ed. G. De Schrijver (Leuven: University Press), 333–350.

³⁹ Henriot, "Social Discernment and the Pastoral Circle," 16.

⁴⁰ Liebert, "Discernment for Our Times," 345.

As the theoretical methodology of this research, I explored the pastoral circle in detail, ranging from its philosophical and theoretical roots, the four-fold structure, and the questions for each movement to the unique characteristics that stem from its nature as a circle. All these features play a considerable role in its theoretical structure, the stimulation of social awareness, and application of the pastoral circle to the spiritual discernment process. Given the methodology described above, I will now engage in a brief description of discernment or choice made in the Korean Christian context. The theoretical construction of guidelines for Christian choice in a specific cultural context begins with the observation and description of the current context.

Chapter Outline

Following the theoretical methods of the Pastoral Circle, this project will begin briefly with the anthropological embracing of culture as the constitutive factor in the academic enterprise. In the first chapter, social descriptive analysis employing cross-sociocultural psychological methods and measurement tools will reveal the psychological differences and cultural elements embedded in choice-making, comparing the East Asian context with the Western context. A detailed examination of existing research will present the three constitutive characteristics of East Asian psychology: collectivism, interdependent way of being, and naive dialectical thinking.

In the second chapter, this study will investigate Neo-Confucian concepts of the cosmos, nature, the human being, and spiritual disciplines as part of an in-depth social analysis of the cultural context. This will shed light upon the religious and ideological fundamentals of the East Asian milieu, which are the intrinsic and foundational origins of the choice pattern. The coined concept of “discerned choice” will be constructed on the basis of the unique notion of the

Election in the *Spiritual Exercises*, written by Ignatius of Loyola.⁴¹ As theological reflection, the new concept of the choice will offer insight into the ways in which a Christian choice may benefit from spiritual discernment through various form of contemplative prayer and may be formulated in ways appropriate to the context of the choice-making in real life.

The refreshing and profound data derived from sociocultural analysis of choice from the psychological sciences, the rigorous investigation of Neo-Confucianism as the philosophical and ideological foundation of East Asian culture, and the theological and spiritual insights related to the discerned choice from the field of Ignatian spirituality will all be integrated and evaluated in the final chapter. The Discerned Choice as Holistic, as Spontaneous and Simultaneous, as Process and as Communal will be presented as core features for East Asian Christian spirituality employing two theoretical methods, Experience Circle and Social Discernment Cycle. The Cycle of Discerned Choice will be presented with seven steps or procedure as practical method for Christian spiritual formation. The argument will demonstrate that a discerned choice as part of spiritual formation can appropriately be embodied in the integrating and complementary dynamics between the discernment process and culturally significant characteristics.

Main Theoretical Assumptions of the Study

In order for this practical theological study to be a well-balanced work in the field of spiritual formation that will offer new insights related to Christian spiritual practices in the East Asian cultural context, several theoretical assumptions and also the scope of the study must be outlined in advance. The primary assumption made in this project is that the spiritual formation

⁴¹ *Election* indicates the certain section in *Spiritual Exercises* [169-188] and is designed to help the retreatants find God's will in making a personal life decision or choice. It will be detailed in the chapter three.

of East Asian Christian individuals will be enhanced or transformed by change or renewal in the East Asian Christian choice-making pattern. Next, the comprehensive prayer methods employed in the *Spiritual Exercises* developed by Ignatius of Loyola contain various types of spiritual practices. The term “spiritual practice” thus refers to various types of spiritual practices described by Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises*. Third, the making of a decision or choice is considered a type of spiritual practice as well as the primary goal of spiritual practices since the choice is usually made as the embodied outcome of the entire spiritual practice process. In addition, choice making is a type of spiritual formation in the sense that it is intimately dependent on the way in which one discerns the revelations of God and one’s vocation. This leads to my theoretical assumption that changing the pattern of one’s Christian choice making might entail changes in one’s spiritual formation. That is, when a spiritual choice pattern is changed, the spiritual formation of the choice-maker might also be changed, nurtured, renewed, or matured.

According to the assumptions of sociocultural psychology, despite the fact that most of the research I draw on is based on cross-cultural research between Europeans (or European Americans) and East Asians (or East Asian Americans), this social scientific discipline “is not limited in ethnocentric terms or to a certain geographically bounded group of people. Culture in this discipline is defined as patterns of representations, actions, and artifacts that are distributed or spread by social interaction.”⁴² Under this definition, then, culture, is not about groups of people—Japanese, Americans, Whites, Latinos; it is not particular groups themselves that should be studied. Rather, the focus should be on the implicit and explicit patterns of meanings,

⁴² Hazel Rose Markus and Maryam G. Hamedani, "Sociocultural Psychology: The Dynamic Interdependence among Self Systems and Social Systems," in *Handbook of Cultural Psychology*, ed. Shinobu Kitayama and Dov Cohen (New York: Guilford Publications, 2007), 11.

practices, and artifacts distributed throughout the contexts in which people participate; the emphasis should be on how people are engaged, invoked, incorporated, contested, or changed to complete themselves and on what guides their behavior.⁴³

This research is built upon another theoretical assumption, which is that the Neo-Confucian description of the cosmos, nature, and human beings represents the culmination and synthesis of the religious, historical, and cultural components of the East Asian context. Neo-Confucianism is named as the common denominator and conspicuous cultural phenomenon observed simultaneously in all three of the East Asian countries (China, Korea, and Japan). Also, this specific form of Confucian ideology is the product of East Asian cultural elements that have been synthesized with other religious concepts and ideas that originated in Taoism, Shamanism, Buddhism, etc. This implies that Neo-Confucianism represents a highly legitimate ideology that is revealed in the religious, philosophical, psychological, and cultural components of the East Asian context.

The core features of the discerned choice as spiritual formation in the Christian context is relevant and appropriate in East Asian countries—China, Japan and Korea (and Vietnam, to some extent)—despite the fact that this research has been investigated mainly in the Korean context. At least three reasons support this theoretical supposition. First, sociocultural psychology data are collected by cross-cultural research methods, mostly between Europeans (or European Americans) and East Asians (Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Asian Americans, etc.), which elucidates common features of cultural phenomena such as customs, social habits, cultural cognitions, value systems, social behaviors, etc. Second, Neo-Confucianism is still commonly believed to be the prominent ideology of these East Asian countries, and it has had an immense influence upon the living customs, cognitive frames of reference, and value systems of people

⁴³ Ibid., 3–39.

from these countries. Third, the core features of the discerned choice and its practical implications are applicable and relevant not only to the East Asian context, but also to the postmodern Western or Euro-American context. This is because the theoretical solidity and comprehensive characteristics of the discerned choice can enhance the integration and synthesis of Western Christian spirituality, which has been experiencing increasing cognitive and social fragmentation.

Chapter 1 Sociocultural Psychological Approaches to Choice

Introduction: Cultural Studies and Anthropological Insights

The human way of life is shaped by culture. Culture affects almost everything we perceive, almost everything we think, and almost everything we do. We cannot understand humans without understanding culture, and we cannot understand human evolution without understanding the evolution of culture.

Historically, there has been ongoing inquiry in the various academic disciplines into human nature through the lens of culture. In modern times, the field of anthropology in particular has engaged with the enduring topic and has notably developed its concept, definition, and nature in diverse ways. British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor is often credited with giving the first definition of culture in anthropology. Equating culture and civilization, he wrote: “Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”⁴⁴ Culture as opposed to civilization was considered to represent generally the indigenous or uncivilized culture from the Western perspective, and the concept of culture has become indispensable for other social scientists including psychologists, sociologists, cultural studies scholars, and even evolutionary biologists.

Over the past couple of decades, however, some groups of anthropologists with a new critical awareness of culture in the postmodern world have offered a new approach to the definition of culture. They believed that the existing definition was highly likely to deflect and even distort the understanding of culture, thus hampering their anthropological research. The

⁴⁴ Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture; Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom*, 4th ed., 2 vols. (London,: J. Murray, 1993), 1.

new conception of culture, initiated by one of the most influential cultural anthropologists, Clifford Geertz, defines culture as “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life.”⁴⁵ In this alternative formulation, Geertz defined culture neither as a counterpart of Western civilization nor as a force or causal agent in the world, but as a context in which people live out their lives. That is, culture is only a matrix of the pattern of meanings embedded in symbols. This renewed definition of culture has played a significant role in fostering new directions in anthropological theories and research since Geertz introduced it.

A renowned cultural anthropologist who is reshaping theories about culture is M. E. Spiro, who articulates that as the scholarly consciousness of culture has been growing in the postmodern world, anthropological enterprises have begun to recognize a transition in the milieu they are existentially standing on, so that “the familiar becomes strange.”⁴⁶ This metaphorical expression implies that for anthropologists—who are not only trained in the social sciences and its methods to classify other cultures, but are also extensively familiar with scientific concepts and measurements—that which is familiar inevitably becomes strange.

Spiro delineates one of the important agendas of American (or Western) anthropology that has problematically originated in Western racism and ethnocentrism, whose most critical strategy has consisted of making the strange familiar, “a strategy that has been deployed to combat alleged moral inferiority of other peoples and cultures, on the one hand, and their alleged

⁴⁵ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures : Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1975/2000), 89.

⁴⁶ Melford.E. Spiro, "On the Strange and Familiar in Recent Anthropological Thought," in *Cultural Psychology : Essays on Comparative Human Development*, ed. James W. Stigler et al.(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 47-61.

cognitive inferiority, on the other.”⁴⁷ Some anthropologists hence propose that the non-Western peoples that comprise the “object” for the Western “subject” are different (inferior) from “ourselves.” This Western attitude has made non-Western objects the ‘other’; it is a form of objectification of non-Western cultures. Some cultural anthropologists are firmly convinced, however, that the refusal to admit to the cultural diversity and differences among peoples crucially renders the goal of anthropology unfulfilled, since the anthropologist’s attitude toward the other plays an unintended role in hampering an understanding of the true concept of things.⁴⁸

Spiro notes two reasons why anthropologists have consistently rejected the making of the familiar strange. First, one group argues that the anthropological agenda would be impossible to achieve if this were necessary, since the meaning system of the ‘higher’ culture (Western civilization in this case) could not be intelligibly translated into the cultural concepts of any other group; they are fundamentally and irreducibly strange. These anthropologists impose a superior attitude and a hierarchical structure, Spiro criticizes, considering anthropology as exclusively the creature of Western culture and the discipline as not a transcultural science; rather, it is more accurately conceived, according to these anthropologists, as an ethnoscience grounded in Western culture, reflecting and being informed by the Western conceptual world.

The second group of anthropologists who reject cultural diversity and multiplicity do so on the grounds that the anthropological agenda would bring about undesirable outcomes for Western societies, since it might trigger a lessening of the Western domination of the non-Western world. Given the historical traces of colonialism and imperialism, this group of anthropologists’ assumption has been backed up by the need of the Western world to justify its political and economic domination over non-Western people. Spiro also denounces the major

⁴⁷ Ibid., 50.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 54.

task of this kind of anthropological approach, which is translating cultural phenomenon into anthropological concepts and terms and then explaining them by means of anthropological theory. However, this agenda is still constructed under the umbrella of Western ethnoscience; Third World cultures are viewed as inferior.

Anthropological approaches embedded heavily in Western culture are critiqued by Spiro as “ego-alien and ego-dystonic,” since if Third World cultures are ‘other,’ then the anthropologist cannot possibly possess the ability to comprehend the thoughts and emotions that make up the minds of Third World actors, since their cultures are incommensurate with his or her own.⁴⁹ It might be reasonable to come up with questions associated with the relevancy of the discipline. For example, in what ways could anthropological research become a holistic and all-embracing discipline, bringing cultural diversity or relativism into the central locus? How could the anthropologist appropriate the value of the culture?

Richard A. Shweder, a cultural anthropologist, has decisively claimed that the problem of rationality, the legacy of the Western Enlightenment, should be resolved as a prerequisite for the cultural studies. The rebuke to the problem of rationality originates from the work of Nicolas Rescher, who wrote, “If others are rationally justified in their conception of things and that conception is different from ours, then we cannot be rationally justified in our conception of things, and vice versa.”⁵⁰ Against Rescher’s argument that rationality disallows conceptional transferability among cultures, Shweder contends that once the conception of things is rationally verified in a culture, it will be able to also be meaningful in other cultures since there are potentialities latent within our rationality that allow us to understand across cultural barriers or

⁴⁹ Ibid., 58.

⁵⁰ Richard A. Shweder, “The Astonishment of Anthropology,” in *Thinking through Cultures: Expeditions in Cultural Psychology*, ed. Richard A. Shweder (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 3.

differences.

The more fundamental problem of rationality is found in its adherence to Western philosophical sources such as Plato, Descartes, and contemporary structuralists.⁵¹ Specifically, the Platonic Tradition insists that the very idea of reality represents something independent of any one of its particular materials within time and space, independent of human involvement and independent of human intention and interests. This dualistic ideological structure is grounded in the idea that existence is a negation of pure being and is aimed to recover the abstract forms, universal grammar, or pure being hidden beneath the “superficialities” of any particular person’s mental functioning or social life. Their primary quest lies in an autonomous being or pure consciousness, without taking serious consideration of the interaction or mutuality of a being with the contexts or environment.

The next limitation of rationality in research on culture comes with the subordination of existence giving rise to accelerated dualistic dynamics by its whole series of subordination of the ‘other.’⁵² The dichotomous view of the real, separating the earth from heaven, the profane from the sacred, the body from the mind, and the subjective from the objective, spurs the subordination of existence. Shweder explains that this view fails to grasp the real through rationality alone, since the real cannot be recapitulated by dualistic viewpoints in the postmodern world. In the end, rationality inherently hinders the interpretation of conceptual diversities in a cultural context.

What is an alternative to the problem of rationality? Romantic approaches and relativism (further pluralism) are suggested as the alternative anthropological ideology to the irrelevance of rationality in the postmodern era, as Shweder notes. First, the romantic literatures merit us to

⁵¹ Richard A. Shweder, "The Astonishment of Anthropology," 6-7.

⁵² Ibid., 9.

represent the infusion of the transcendental into nature by describing heroic figures descending from the gods, which bridges the gap between existence and transcendence.⁵³ Rather than pursuing pure being out of any context, Romanticism enhances the subjective experience without denial of reality. It also appreciates the human capacity of imagination without disregarding the ability to reason. These features can take us beyond our intellectual or reasoning senses to face the real locus where logic cannot even be formulated. Furthermore, the Romantic conception of “an interpenetration or interdependency of objectivity and subjectivity, of pure being and existence, has been variously expressed as the idea that nothing in particular exists independently of our theoretical interpretation of it.”⁵⁴

Relativism, the other alternative, is supported by anthropological research on the spiritual practice of *suttee* in India. For example, an eighteen-year-old college-educated Rajput woman, Roop Kanwar, immolated herself with her dead husband resting on her lap, following her religious and cultural tradition.⁵⁵ Criticized as “primitive” or “uncivilized,” on the one hand, the Indian cultural phenomenon ignited support for the practice of *suttee* in the culture. This practice symbolically unveils the existence of a world where we may encounter human beings acting in accord with their culture, but we are so captivated by the ideal of logical analysis so that it hampers to comprehend the practice. It asks us to admit the existence of a world in which our conceptual values and perspectives lose their relevance, but they have a validating and meaningful interpretation within the relative or cultural approach.

Relativism has resonated concurrently with the other end of the anthropological spectrum, in the work of R.B. Edgerton. He remarks that cultural adaptiveness has been broadly

⁵³ Richard A. Shweder, 11

⁵⁴ Ibid., 18

⁵⁵ Ibid., 15. This happened on September 4, 1987.

influenced by the history of anthropology in that the current form of a certain cultural context is considered the advanced form historically and that the members that constitute the culture adapt and develop its crucial components. Enumerating several cases with supporting theories, Edgerton ascertains that while humans in various societies are capable of empathy, kindness, and even love, and they can achieve astounding mastery of their environment, “they are also capable of maintaining beliefs, values, and social institutions that result in senseless cruelty, needless suffering, and monumental folly in their relations among themselves as well as with other societies and the physical environment in which they live.”⁵⁶

For him, it should not be readily assumed that traditional or conventional beliefs or practices are adaptive, regardless of their rationality and irrationality in a surviving society. Rather, it should be regarded as part of a continuum of adaptive values, that these are tolerable forms since human reason has failed to renew or transform the societal, economical, and environmental structures.⁵⁷ This leads us effectively into the awareness that dropping blind dependence upon rationality and attaining relativism in approaching a particular culture equips us theoretically with the most appropriate anthropological posture.

While scholarly endeavors to overcome the blemishes of rationality, such as the works of Shweder and Edgerton, have captured recent attention, the more practical research by Clifford Geertz on the anthropological approach to culture has resonated profoundly in the academic world. In his groundbreaking article, “On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding,” Geertz elaborates his main idea, based on his first-hand research in Bali. Drawing primarily on his definition of culture as symbol, he contends that all anthropologists should gain the native’s

⁵⁶ Robert. B. Edgerton, "Traditional Beliefs and Practices: Are Some Better Than Others?," in *Culture Matters : How Values Shape Human Progress*, ed. Samuel P. Huntington and Lawrence E. Harrison (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 131.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 132-138.

point of view, for the symbol can be authentically interpreted only when one comprehends the implications of the people of the culture.⁵⁸ What one perceives in a culture is what the actors in the culture perceive “with,” or “by means of,” or “through,” or whatever word one may choose. He urges, therefore, that observation with direct contact must be accompanied by anthropological research, in contrast to objectifying the actor of the culture through the Western-oriented worldview.

Geertz did not, however, promote total absorption of the anthropologist into the culture, or the losing one’s own identity. He also was alarmed by the smoothing or blurring of boundaries between the inside and the outside, or “first person” and “third person” descriptions, or “phenomenological” and “objectivist,” because despite of its ambiguity the boundary presents an anthropologist with a distinctive conception of the self that is far from being merely theoretical.⁵⁹ This precise attitude gives one a comprehensive perspective sufficient to understand the cultural elements observed within the dynamics. That is, in describing cultural symbols, the anthropologist travels a continuous dialectical path between the local view and the global view, simultaneously.⁶⁰

Religion in the Cultural Anthropological View

In the context of my research, it is helpful to explore the way in which the cultural anthropologist conceptualizes religion. Clifford Geertz speaks of religion as consisting of a

⁵⁸ Clifford Geertz, "From the Native's Point of View": On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding," in *Culture Theory : Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*, ed. Richard A. Shweder, Robert Alan Levine, and Social Science Research Council (U.S.). Committee on Social and Affective Development During Childhood.(Cambridge Cambridgeshire ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

⁵⁹ Ibid., 127-128.

⁶⁰ Clifford Geertz, "From the Native's Point of View," 134-135.

people's worldview and ethos, which become mutually reinforcing entities. The mediating relationship between cosmology and ethics is seen as crucial to an understanding of religion in different cultural contexts.

Geertz observes that religion, as a symbolic system cannot exist apart from a cultural context. Symbols, he suggests, mutually shape and are shaped by worldviews and ethos. When these two dimensions reinforce each other, there is a sense of coherence and order in a society. When they no longer function as patterns of meaning, a crisis of belief and practice occurs. This is, as Geertz points out, one way in which modern societies are in conflict with traditional beliefs and practices. In such circumstances, long-standing religious symbols appear to be unable to validate human action or substantiate cosmology.

Geertz summarizes his concept of people's worldview and ethos, their cosmology and their spiritual practices, as mutually confirming entities expressed in symbols and ritual, in the following statement:

As we are to deal with meaning, let us begin with a paradigm: viz., that sacred symbols function to synthesize a people's ethos—the tone, character and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood—and their worldview—the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order. In religious belief and practice a group's ethos is rendered intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world-view describes, while the world-view is rendered emotionally convincing by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs peculiarly well arranged to accommodate such a way of life.⁶¹

Geertz defines religion as “(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that

⁶¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures : Selected Essays*, 89.

(5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.”⁶² His conception of religion from the perspective of cultural anthropology sheds light upon the significance of the cultural aspect of human experiences, including religious and spiritual experiences. For Geertz, religious belief and practice inherently are embedded in the cognitive procedures that the people of a particular cultural context share and have adapted. As the symbolic elements unfold in religious rituals and spiritual practices, implying the representation of a way of life, the religious experiences can be analytically portrayed through the cultural approaches by decoding, encoding, and synthesizing the symbolical aspects.

The Emergence of a New Academic Discipline

Social Psychological Adaption and Cultural Anthropology

Cultural psychology, a relatively new academic discipline, has its theoretical foundation in the new anthropological research on culture, which we have explored above. Cultural anthropologist Richard Shweder asserts that professional academic research on culture demands the devising of a sub-discipline that is not only able scientifically to measure and analyze cultural phenomena, but also able explicitly to interpret the semiotic nature of the culture as symbol.

Initiating the launching of the new academic discipline, Shweder delineates its theoretical premise on human existential uncertainty and on an “intentional” conception of “constituted” worlds.⁶³ Humans inherently seek meanings out of the sociocultural environment that is created not by accident, but by intention. In this milieu, the being cannot be analyzed into independent and dependent variables. Neither side can be identified without borrowing from the

⁶² Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” in *The Interpretation of Culture*, 90.

⁶³ Richard A. Shweder, “Cultural Psychology: What Is It?,” in *Thinking through Cultures : Expeditions in Cultural Psychology*(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 74.

specifications of the other. Only interdependent identification can discover the meanings.

In addition, the environment is intentional. This is because “its existence is real, factual, and forceful, but only so long as there exists a community of persons whose beliefs, desires, emotions, purpose, and other mental representations are directed at, and thereby influenced by, it.”⁶⁴ That is to say, intentional things exist only in intentional worlds; the existence would not exist independently of our involvement with and reaction to the world. “Cultural psychology is the study of intentional worlds. It is the study of personal functioning in particular intentional worlds. It is the study of the interpersonal maintenance of any intentional world. It is investigation of those psycho-somatic-socio-cultural and, inevitably, divergent realities in which subject and object cannot possibly be separated and kept apart because they are so interdependent as to need each other to be.”⁶⁵

Differentiating cultural psychology from related academic disciplines such as general psychology, cross-cultural psychology, psychological anthropology, and ethnopsychology, Shweder prescribes that its central theme is that we have to understand the way persons, cultures, and natures make each other up. Psyche and culture are thus interconnected. Every person is stimulus bound, and every stimulus is person bound. That is what it means for culture and psyche to make each other up.⁶⁶ Its goal thus is to seek the mind indissociably embedded in the meanings and resonances that are both its product and its components. According to Shweder, the aim of academic research for cultural psychologists is identified as “to conceive imaginatively of subject-dependent objects (intentional worlds) and object-dependent subjects

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 76.

⁶⁶ Richard A. Shweder, "Cultural Psychology: What Is It?" 77-97.

(intentional persons) interpenetrating each other's identities or setting the conditions for each other's existence and development, while jointly undergoing change through social interaction. That aim is to develop an interpretative framework in which nothing really real is by fundamental nature fixed, universal, transcendent and abstract."⁶⁷

The other way to characterize cultural psychology, Shweder notes, is as an interpretive discipline.⁶⁸ Among several different possible academic approaches, he chooses the so-called "thinking through others"; he features cultural psychologists as situated perspectival observers thinking while there is an alien land or with an alien other, trying to comprehend experiences within the context. As the practitioner of an interpretive discipline, an appropriate attitude of the cultural psychologist is to observe as an alien while in the different cultural context, but to try to make sense of context-specific experiences. This type of representing the other goes hand in hand with a process of portraying one's own self as part of the process of representing the other, thereby encouraging an open-ended, self-reflexive, dialogical turn of mind.

In short, what Shweder calls for is an exploration of the human mind, and of one's own mind, by thinking through the ideas and practices of other peoples and their cultures. And he critiques the concept of the "person" implicit in Western social science, as well as psychiatric theories of the "subject." He maintains that it will come as no surprise to cultural psychology if it should turn out that there are different psychological generalizations or "nomological networks"—e.g., a Hindu psychology, a Protestant psychology—appropriate for the different semiotic regions of the world.

The first scientific research from the field of social psychology to Shweder's proposal was executed by Harry C. Triandis. From a social psychological perspective, he supports

⁶⁷ Ibid., 100.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 108-110.

Shweder's argument that contemporary psychology is best conceived as a Western indigenous psychology due to the tendency of Westerners to believe that they are constructing universal theories rather than psychological theories in their own culture.⁶⁹ This reflects that people tend to believe that the way they see the world is the way most people see the world. Therefore, they tend to see their psychological theories as universal.

This recent recognition of the value of culture has invited recognition of the need for in-depth research on cultural syndromes, which is defined as dimensions of cultural variation that can be used as parameters of psychological theories.⁷⁰ For instance, collectivism and individualism is one of the adequate descriptions of cultural differences. These kinds of polythetic constructs, he maintains, result in the identification of cultural syndromes and will consequently prevent psychological theories and methods from being isolated in a particular cultural background. Rather, Triandis notes that the study of cultural syndromes can provide a complementary and reciprocal path for the theories and methods of psychology to be developed into a universal psychology. Comprehensive psychological research is necessary to embrace culture as the most significant constituted factor in its theories and methods.

The Social Scientific Methodology of Cultural Psychology

The cross-cultural methodology of cultural psychology verifies the dynamic interdependence among self-systems and social systems. Asserting that human experiences are all culturally shaped, my current research will focus on demonstrating that choice-making or decision-making, as a human activity is highly likely to vary depending on the cultural context.

⁶⁹ Harry C. Triandis, "The Psychological Measurement of Cultural Syndromes," *American Psychologist* 51, no. (1996), 407-408.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

The initial validation of the scientific analysis of culture in the social psychological enterprise was made by the pivotal article, "Violence and U.S. Regional Culture" by Richard E. Nisbett.⁷¹ Deeply aware of culture as a significant element in psychological research, Nisbett paid attention to the research showing that the homicide rate of White Americans in urban areas of the South is relatively higher than that of rural areas in the Northeast, which contradicted the initial presupposition. His groundbreaking research demonstrated the misconception behind the socially common bias that the homicide rate in any urban region of the United States would be lower than that in any rural region. This social phenomenon in the urban South is associated with several aspects that are specifically embedded in cultural values, such as cultural patterns to the behavior insults.

The research reveals that regardless of their income, Southerners have a conspicuous tendency to respond with more anger to an insult than do Northerners. The results indicate that Southerners are more sensitive to provocation that can be interpreted as an insult than are Northerners, in two respects. First, the provocation makes them more angry. It seems not to be something they can brush off as easily as Northerners can. Second, the insult seems to prime violent responses to subsequently encountered insult stimuli. The implications of these results seem clear. Southerners, by virtue of the emotional meaning that the insult has for them, are more likely to display anger in certain situations in which escalation is dangerous and are more susceptible to considering violent responses in those situations.

Nisbett took this research further by elucidating the association between economic structures and its implicit relationship to the cultural value system—that is, the relationship between the culture of honor and the herding economy. On the basis of the existing bias that the economical structure that revolves around herding historically provides a higher likelihood of

⁷¹ Richard E. Nisbett, "Violence and U.S. Regional Culture," *American Psychologist* 48, no. 4 (1993).

violence, he verified that the higher homicide rates in the South uncovered its historical culture of honor, stemming ultimately from its herding economic structures. Nisbett's research makes two noteworthy contributions. First, it verifies the critical function of the cultural level of the human activities that cultural anthropologists study. Second, the validity of the scientific analysis of the culture is initially gained in the psychological enterprise. Nisbett's research therefore played an important role in demonstrating how psychologists may construct and enhance the appropriate contours and methods for cultural psychological research.

Concerted efforts to delineate the methodologies and research topics of cultural psychology have vindicated the validity of cross-cultural methodology. Although there are a variety of approaches for studying psychology and culture,⁷² one of the most widely used strategies has been to contrast cultures on the basis of *cultural syndromes*, which are patterns of shared attitudes, beliefs, or values that are organized around a theme and largely shared by members of an identifiable group (Triandis, 1996). Conscious of the potential mistakes made without established criteria, Peng, Nisbett, and Wang suggest solid criteria for the academic discipline with two conditions.⁷³ First, in order to prevent the research from eliciting cultural values that the people do not actually have, the method has to be equipped with the deprivation

⁷² For reviews, see Greenfield, P. M., "Culture as process: Empirical Methods for Cultural psychology," *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology*, Vol. 1, eds. J. W. Berry, Y. H. Poortinga, & J. Pandey (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1997); Nisbett, R. E., & Cohen, D., *Culture of honor: The psychology of violence in the south*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); Shweder, R. A., Goodnow, J., Hatano, G., LeVine, R. A., Markus, H., & Miller, P. "The Cultural Psychology of Development: One Mind, Many Mentalities," in *Handbook of Child Psychology, Vol. 1*, eds. W. Damon & R. M. Lerner, (New York: Wiley, 1998): 865-937; Triandis, H. C., McCusker, C., & Hui, H., "Multimethod probes of individualism and collectivism," in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 59, (1990): 1006-1020.

⁷³ Kaiping Peng, Richard E. Nisbett, and Nancy Y. C. Wong, "Validity Problems Comparing Values across Cultures and Possible Solutions," *Psychological Methods* 2, no. 4 (1997).

model.⁷⁴ Second, the reference-group effect should be recognized to eliminate undesired outcomes and enhance the scientific objectivity of the research.⁷⁵

The other cautious voice concerning the necessity for solid criteria is that of Shinobu Kitayama. Writing in 2002, he warns that it is typical for researchers to view culture as a static entity, which hampers cultural psychologists' efforts to measure cultural phenomena.⁷⁶ He maintains that culture defined as dynamic systems can be efficiently measured by empirically captured, culture-dependent computer models that functionally link a set of variables in each of many domains, such as well-being, aggression, helping, person perception, motivation, and the like.

Heine and others summarized in 2002 the significant and conclusive developments in the methodology of cultural psychology.⁷⁷ Delineating guidelines for the reference-group effect, they suggest four methods for establishing cultural psychology as an academic discipline. They propose first that using research methods that determine cultural syndromes by measuring personal responses should be prohibited. This affirms the value of quantitative data rather than

⁷⁴ Peng et al. noted that Singaporean Chinese are more likely than Americans to value choosing their own goals, and Americans are more likely than Chinese to value humility. Simply inspecting these data leads one to conclude that Singapore is more a culture of freedom of choice and America is more a culture of humility, even though such a conclusion challenges widely shared stereotypes of the two cultures. The deprivation effect seems especially problematic for comparisons of values and is less an issue for comparisons of traits (i.e., people who feel particularly lacking in a trait are unlikely to evaluate themselves highly on that trait). Although I do not explore the role of deprivation in the present studies, I note that deprivation is a pernicious problem in the assessment of culture.

⁷⁵ Peng et al. (1997) noted that people from different cultural groups use different referents in their self-reported values. For example, Chinese evaluate themselves in comparison with other Chinese, whereas Americans evaluate themselves with reference to other Americans. They name this the 'reference-group effect.'

⁷⁶ Shinobu Kitayama, "Culture and Basic Psychological Processes - toward a System View of Culture: Comment on Oyserman Et Al.," *Psychological Bulletin* 128, no. 1 (2002).

⁷⁷ Steven J. Heine and others, "What's Wrong with Cross-Cultural Comparisons of Subjective Likert Scales?: The Reference-Group Effect," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82, no. 6 (2002).

qualitative methods. Another strategy is to have people compare themselves using an arithmetic standard. As the standards are derived mathematically from within each sample, they serve to equate the cultures on the question under study, namely, how people view themselves in comparison with other subjects. The third strategy is to determine how different cultures respond to information that is either consistent or inconsistent with implicit theories that are hypothetically shared by members of a culture. The reasoning behind this approach is that if instructions lead to different behavior compared with a control group, the instructions probably conveyed new information not part of widely shared lay theories of the culture. A final strategy is to use a forced-choice framework that includes items with concrete, objective response options. This method has been shown to enhance the validity of comparisons across groups in much past research.

Using cross-cultural methodologies, I will now engage with my research topic, which is the way in which Christian spiritual choice-making in the East Asian context may be distinctively dissimilar to the way choices are made in the Western context, due to cultural differences. These psychological methodologies guide us in assuming that the choice- or decision-making process in the East Asian context would interplay significantly with the cultural context, thus revealing its different characteristics from those of other cultures, specifically the Western context.

Cultural Implication of Choice in Religious Studies

Scope and Nature

Election is an absolutely unique concept, as it appears in the tradition of Christian discipleship, inherited specifically from Ignatius of Loyola and his spiritual legacy, the *Spiritual Exercises*. Remarkably, Ignatius defined the well being of the human soul, and he held that

human life is totally dependent upon the person's realization that God is the origin and the ultimate purpose of human soul. Therefore, this fundamental understanding leads Ignatius to confirm that human self-realization and good order are rooted in consistency and integration between that ultimate purpose and choices we make in particular circumstances.⁷⁸ Thus, scholars agree that Ignatius made an effort to establish in his *Exercises* the foundation for systematically describing *election* (*Electio* in Latin, and *Eleccion* in Spanish, 'choice' or 'decision') as the ultimate goal of spiritual practices.⁷⁹

It has been generally accepted in the Western context until recently that *Election* (choice) is a universally expected human phenomenon within any authentic spiritual practice.⁸⁰ However, the suspicion that this phenomenon and its manifest outcomes might not be universal and ubiquitous has been growing since Christianity spread out outside of the Western world. It is verifiable that the phenomenon of choice making, the manifest outcomes of election, will not be beyond the cultural context. Election is contextually construed, and none of the choices that are made can be made outside of one's culture. Susan Rakoczy convincingly supports the idea that in spite of their common journey within the same spiritual exercise, the fruits and outcomes for the participants vary depending on the cultural context; there is no exception to importance of the cultural context in choice-making and decision-making.⁸¹ Hence, skeptical of the possibility of

⁷⁸ David Lonsdale, "Ignatian Election," in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 269.

⁷⁹ Javier Melloni, S.J. *The Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2000) 49-53.

⁸⁰ David Lonsdale, "Ignatian Election," in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 269.

⁸¹ Susan Rakoczy, "Unity, Diversity, and Uniqueness: Foundations of Cross-Cultural Spiritual Direction," in *Common Journey, Different Paths: Spiritual Direction in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Susan Rakoczy (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992), 9-23.

choice-making beyond any cultural context, I will demonstrate in this chapter that East Asian Christians are highly likely to have different modes of *election* from those of Western Christians due to the cultural variation of choice-making in the East Asian context.

According to cross-cultural psychological research, Westerners have a tendency to think of choice as critical actions; choices are saturated with meaning and taken very seriously. Choice is the vehicle for one to express and display one's individuality, uniqueness, autonomy, convictions, traits, attributes, or, in short, one's self. In contrast, for East Asians, who are characterized mainly as collectivist and interdependent, choice-making is a much more complicated process; choice-making is necessarily linked to personal bonds, to obligations, and to the maintenance of status or position. It is less in the service of expressing one's preferences, goals, or convictions and more in the service of reflecting and improving one's position in a particular social situation or structure. Therefore, the focus is not just a representation of the person's own interests, goals, and preference, but instead a holistic representation of the relational context in which the person's own behavior and that of others are reciprocally interdependent.

This study will first examine the Western theory of choice as the psychological foundational data of the universal applications of choice. Several social cultural psychological studies that verify the critical function of the cultural variations of choice making will be explored as the counterpart to the view of the universality of choice-making in every culture. Next, the features of East Asian choice-making that are differentiated from Western choice making will be verified using three social cultural psychological methods.

Initially, the research will be equipped with the insights from the existing research data and the outcomes of the choice studies in the sociocultural enterprises ranging from "choice as

the self-expression,” “choice as deviance or uniqueness, harmony or conformity,” “choice and intrinsic motivation,” and “overconfidence, self-efficacy, and self-esteem and choice,” to “risk preference and choice.” Each survey will comprehensively uncover the different aspects or phrase of the choice making, which will become the foundational resources of this research construction. Then, the main contribution of this research, the cultural variation of the choice, will be unfolded with three dimensions.

As a first step, the concept of individualism/collectivism will be defined as the prominent contextual frame of reference. This framework leads to the prediction that the East Asian person, in a collectivistic context, is likely to take a longer time than a Western person, in an individualistic context, to make a choice. Second, the differences between independent and interdependent modes of being result in differences in the ways in which the East Asian self is shaped by and interacts with the cultural context. Here, I suggest that the interdependent self of the East Asian has a relatively stronger tendency to collect reliable information and higher references from outside resources.⁸² Third, the holistic mode of thinking and the naïve dialecticism of the East Asian offer a crucial clue to comprehending the cognitive features that strongly influence the choice- and decision-making process. This influences the prediction that the East Asian tends to regard choice making as an ongoing process for discovering the points of compromise among contradictory or opposite conditions. In addition, the East Asian person making a choice seems to accept more inconsistency without difficulty. Though this research centers on the ways in which East Asians make choices and are motivated, its basic purpose is to

⁸² The “higher reference” implies here the references or information obtained from those who are positioning at the higher levels in power, relations, social standings etc. Rather than scrutinizing in detail inner resources or given options within their own context, the interdependent self tends to ask advices or to give higher authority to those who are meaningful and influential on their lives so that the advices or direction from the people in higher standings are considered to become readily prioritized to make significant decision or choice.

better understand the East Asian self itself.

Within the methodological frame of Pastoral Circle, this research will present the descriptive and social analytic information with quantitative data, which will answer the main questions in this stage: Where and with whom are we locating ourselves as we begin our process? Whose experience is being considered? What are people feeling, what are they undergoing, how are they responding? Are there groups that are “left out” when an experience is identified?

I am deeply aware of the essentialist aspect of the research scope. This is somewhat inevitable with cross-cultural methodology since quantitative data recapitulate and compare salient characteristics within certain groups. I am however, strongly conscious that East Asians also have a tendency towards individualism and independent self-systems and Westerners also have a tendency towards collectivism and interdependence. In addition, even though cultural commonality among East Asian countries such as China, Japan, and Korea is presupposed in the research methodology, I have been careful not to oversimplify and generalize across the diversity of cultural variation.

Western Choice: Self-Determination Theory

As social theorists have documented, modern Western cultural views of the self tend to give primacy to the autonomous individual and to treat the social collective as a secondary formation.⁸³ The social collective has been viewed as ambivalent since, even though it provides a social order considered necessary for human survival, it has also been considered as putting constraints on the individual. Handling the inherent tension between individual freedom and

⁸³ Joan G. Miller, “Culture and Agency: Implications for Psychological Theories of Motivation and Social Development,” ed. Virginia Murphy-Berman and John J. Berman, *Cross-Cultural Differences in Perspectives on the Self* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 120.

social requirements, social theorists have assumed that it is critical to balance these competing thrusts. However, the clear reality is that the primacy of the autonomous individual has not been diminished in any of the social theories of the Western world. Self-determination theory is one of the prominent theories describing the scientific way in which the Western individual is likely to be motivated in the choice-making process.⁸⁴

The focal point of self-determination theory is the importance of internalization and of self-determination. Internalization is seen as a primary process in choice through which individuals come to identify very closely with a social expectation or other external constraint that they experience subjectively. This is the usually observed process in the Western self—that individuals initially experience expectations as external constraints and that over time they internalize these expectations. Any external actions or reactions of the Western self are the manifested internalization through self-determination; the initiatives are held by the individuals. Without the internalizing process of external or societal expectation, any specific actions or reactions would be unlikely to be embodied in the Western self.

Works from the perspective of self-determination theory give rise to the view not only that choice is fundamental to the self but that, on a phenomenological level, that the experience of the self is one of self-perceived autonomy from external constraints.⁸⁵ The self (agent) makes choices in pursuit of integrity of the self; to make choices is thus to be self-determined. In this view, the individual is regarded as an initiating agent coming to internalize expectations and make choices based on internalization and self-determination. After all, it is apparent that choice-making is predominantly determined by the individual's and one's own internalizing process.

⁸⁴ Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior* (New York: Plenum, 1985).

⁸⁵ Edward L. & Ryan Deci, Richard M., "Human Autonomy: The Basis for True Self-Esteem," in *Efficacy, Agency, and Self-Esteem* (New York: Plenum Press, 1995).

Can this theory, however, be universally applicable or have ubiquitous plausibility without taking into consideration the human context? The research outcomes in the field of cross-cultural psychology cast strong doubt on the possibility of a positive answer to this question. Hereafter, my argument will address the results of cross-cultural studies that, taken together, affirm the lack of consistent applicability of the self-determination theory in the choice-making context.

Choice in Sociocultural Psychological Research

Cultural psychology pays reasonable attention to the fact that human subjects do not exist in isolation but instead are fundamentally interdependent within a particular context. This form of cultural study is suspicious, therefore, of the assumption that a choice, even a religious or spiritual choice, can be made in isolation from the cultural context. Cross-cultural psychological methodology will be employed to demonstrate the ways in which different cultural frames of reference, different self systems, and different modes of thinking can strongly affect the choice- or decision-making process in different cultural contexts.

Choice as Self-Expression

Heejung Kim and David Sherman explore cultural differences in how people from East Asian and European American cultural contexts are affected by expression of their internal attributes, especially focusing on their preferences and choice.⁸⁶ Their research shows that in the Western cultural tradition, expression of thoughts, preferences, and feelings is considered to be a way to express one's selfhood and internal attributes, and thus freedom of expression becomes a powerful sign of individual freedom. However, Kim and Sherman find that in other cultural

⁸⁶ Heejung S. Kim and David K. Sherman, "Express Yourself: Culture and the Effect of Self-Expression on Choice," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 92, no. 1 (2007).

contexts in which the concept of the self and the model of relationships are different, the meaning of self-expression may be different. In many cultural contexts in East Asia, the person is understood not as an independent entity but primarily as a relational entity. In these cultures, relationships define the self, and the person is viewed as connected with others.⁸⁷ For instance, in the East Asian cultural context, expression of one's thoughts may be neither particularly encouraged nor viewed positively.

Kim and Sherman's research begins with the awareness that people express themselves through their choices. Through choice making, people can make their preferences and values overt and observable. Because of this function of choice as self-expression, having the freedom to choose symbolizes the freedom of individuality, and the act of choosing becomes significant in the individualist cultural context. For instance, the research of Iyengar and Lepper (1999) suggests that American culture places a strong emphasis on choice, and people value their freedom to choose and care about what they choose; having one's choice usurped even by those who are close to oneself is demotivating for European Americans.⁸⁸

Yet, the cultural psychological research from Kim and Sherman shows that choice-making does not lead to the same psychological consequences among those from East Asian cultural contexts. Their scientific measurements and outcomes reveal that self-expression is more frequently used for establishing self-identification in a European American cultural context than in an East Asian. For instance, one of their experiments tested whether the expression of preference and how much people are committed and invested in their choices are a function of

⁸⁷ Hazel R. Markus and Shinobu Kitayama, "Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation," *Psychological Review* 98, no. 2 (1991): 224-253; Harry C. Triandis, "The Self and Social Behavior in Differing Cultural Contexts," *Psychological Review* 96, no. 3 (1989): 506-520.

⁸⁸ Sheena S. Iyengar and Mark R. Lepper, "Rethinking the Value of Choice: A Cultural Perspective on Intrinsic Motivation," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 76, no. 3 (1999).

cultural background. The researchers asked two test participant groups—55 European American and 35 East Asian American undergraduates at a California university— to evaluate pens and to select their favorite. Then, without pre-notice, the testers usurped the choice of the participants and forced them to evaluate an alternative, less desirable pen. This test measured whether participants would denigrate this less desirable choice as a function of culture and whether they had previously expressed their original preference. The results demonstrated that for European Americans, initially expressing their preference affected their subsequent evaluation of a pen they had not chosen; they evaluated the un-chosen pen more harshly than when they had not already expressed their preference. On the contrary, for East Asians, the previous expression of a preference did not affect their evaluation of the un-chosen pen. That is, European Americans were more invested in their expressed choice and, hence, derogated the un-chosen item more, whereas East Asian Americans did not seem to differ in how invested they felt toward their choice, whether a preference was expressed or not.

This experiment reveals several features of cultural variation in the association between self-expression and choice. First, European Americans tend to view speech as an expression of internal attributes and ultimately as an expression of the self. Second, the experiment demonstrates that the reason European Americans care more about self-expression is due to their independent self-construal. In addition, the results show that the actual roles of expression in preference judgments are consistent with cultural assumptions about self-expression. The experiment affirms that whereas the expression of choice leads European Americans to be more invested and committed to their choice, East Asian Americans are relatively unaffected by the expression of choice. This statement reveals the connection between the value of choice expression and the actual effect of choice expression. It demonstrates that European Americans

place greater emphasis on self-expression than do East Asians, and this difference explains the cultural differences in how people from each culture are affected by the expression of choice.

The research of Kim and Sherman also acknowledges that the process of choice-making is not explicitly or directly related to self-expression in the East Asian cultural context in which the model of relationships and the concept of the self are different. In brief, their research verifies the hypothesis that the Western self tends to facilitate choice-making as a way to express oneself, since one's internal attributes outwardly define who one is. On the other hand, the East Asian self is more likely than the Western to feel secure about the self when others can see their roles, social status, and relationships. As a result, the East Asian self tends to make use of choice-making to embody social attributes through actions such as fulfilling obligations that come with social roles, or maintaining relationships.

As a whole, the study verifies that self-expression as choice carries greater cultural significance among people from a European American cultural context as a means to commit, establish, and affirm who they are. Then, what kind of function does choice-making play in the East Asian context? If the East Asian choice-making process is less likely to reveal personal and internal attributes, in what cultural ways is choice used in the East Asian context?

Choice as Deviance or Uniqueness, Harmony or Conformity

An interesting study performed by Kim and Markus gives critical insights on the cultural variation of choice- and decision-making.⁸⁹ Using the example of choosing a coffee type, is all choice just a matter of individual preference and of some inherent quality of the object, or is it embedded with something else together? They proposed the theoretical assumption that in the East Asian cultural context, in which the values of harmony and individual responsibility to the

⁸⁹ Heejung Kim and Hazel Rose Markus, "Deviance or Uniqueness, Harmony or Conformity? A Cultural Analysis," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 77, no. 4 (1999).

group are stressed, the value of conformity is repeatedly emphasized to individuals. The acts of individuals following social or communal norms have therefore been considered not as personal preferences but as mandatory for sustaining and fostering group harmony and the collectivistic cultural tradition. This implies that self-uniqueness is not desirable, but the willingness to integrate or to adjust one's self to group norms is indispensable to the progress of the group.

Kim and Markus designed a test to examine how preferences for conformity and uniqueness are manifested through individual choice. Participants in this study were asked to choose one pen from a group of five pens. The purpose was to test how the appearance of an object—whether it appeared as part of a minority or majority in relation to other objects—would affect the pattern of choices by people from American or East Asian cultural contexts. And the hypothesis was that Americans would choose objects that were different from others, whereas East Asian would choose objects that were the same as others. The presupposition was confirmed by the test results, which showed that the percentage of participants choosing a more uncommon color was higher among European Americans (75% and 70%) than East Asians (30% and 15%).⁹⁰ Two examinations supported that each culture's values were consistent with what the individual chose. That is, the cultural preference for conformity or uniqueness and individual choices for those qualities are interconnected.

The other provocative experiment conducted by Kim and Markus was an analysis of themes in magazine advertisements from the United States and Korea to specifically examine how the themes of conformity and uniqueness are used. To do so, they constructed three themes that formed the conformity category: respect for collective values and beliefs, harmony with group norms, and following a trend. On the other hand, four themes formed the uniqueness

⁹⁰ Ibid., 791.

category: rebelling against collective values and beliefs, freedom, choice, and individual uniqueness. The cross-cultural comparison of magazine advertisements found that Korean advertisements commonly use collectivistic appeals emphasizing relationships with others, whereas American advertisements commonly use individualistic appeals emphasizing the individual. The uniqueness themes that were favored in American advertisements are highly consistent with American cultural ideals that value individual rights and individuality over the collective. In contrast, Korean advertisements attempt to convince Koreans that being like others is the right way to be, and thus they perpetuate cultural values that create, construct, and constitute individual psychological tendencies that reinforce the institutional construction.⁹¹

The research of Kim and Markus contributes to our understanding of the implications of the connection between choice and culture. Whereas choice-making is highly likely to embody an individual's conformity to collective norms in the East Asian culture, it strongly tends to reveal a person's individual uniqueness to others in European American culture. This cross-cultural symptom is consistently discovered in magazine advertisements considered to be good examples of social representations of certain beliefs. While cultural values and beliefs tend to be embedded in personal choices, the culturally homogenous society implicitly encourages individuals to conform to its harmonious mechanism by similar choices. Then, I ask the question, are individual choice and intrinsic motivation virtually equated to the cultural context? If choice is not universal characteristics, how is intrinsic motivation related to choice-making in particular cultural contexts?

Choice and Intrinsic Motivation

⁹¹ Ibid., 795.

The cross-cultural investigation of choice and intrinsic motivation by Iyengar and Lepper⁹² sheds critical light on the cultural influence upon the individual act of choice-making. The individual chooser claimed as the independent self, based on Markus and Kitayama's 1991 study,⁹³ is more likely to rely on intrinsic motivation than the individuals of interdependent selves. Iyengar and Lepper executed an experiment with the primary hypothesis that the critical role of intrinsic motivation in choice making would be less relevant to the interdependent selves than to the independent selves.

The three test cases were designed by Iyengar and Lepper to demonstrate scientifically the degree to which subjects (especially children, in this case) would be motivated either by the intrinsic attributes of a choice or by the interpersonal dynamics in the context of choice making. The first test was designed to allow children to make a personal choice alone over some typically small or incidental aspect of an activity. The second test offered the same choice in the presence of someone who had had no previous contact with them. In the third case, the children were asked to make a choice in the presence of someone theoretically considered by the child to be both trustworthy and close in relationship (the mother of the child). A remarkable distinction between the children from different cultural backgrounds was discovered in their performance in the different situations. That is, the American, independent children showed a better performance in personal choice in the absence of another person than in the presence of another person. In contrast, the Asian American, interdependent children manifested the highest performance rate in the choice when in the presence of the in-group member.

⁹² Sheena S. Iyengar and Lepper.

⁹³ Hazel R. Markus and Shinobu Kitayama, "Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation," *Psychological Review* 98, no. 2 (1991): 224-253. This article is considered as the most fundamental in elucidating and establishing the cultural variation in the self-system as the format of the independent vs. interdependent.

These research results buttressed the researchers' assumption that the context in which an individual choice is offered may not always produce the highest levels of intrinsic motivation. In these experiments, the intrinsic motivation and performance of Asian American children proved highest not in contexts offering personal choice, but in those in which choices were determined for them by valued in-group members. In contrast, Anglo American children displayed higher levels of intrinsic motivation and performance in contexts emphasizing personal choice, relative to contexts in which choices were made for them, regardless of the identity of the other person making a choice for them. Furthermore, individual choice seems to be more crucial to American independent selves, for whom the act of making a personal choice offers not only an opportunity to express and receive one's personal preference, but also a chance to establish one's unique self-identity. On the other hand, for the Asian American interdependent self, personal choice does not seem to be as important. For Iyengar and Lepper, choice-making by interdependent selves plays a minimal role, presumably because the choice made by the relevant in-group is perceived as providing a greater chance to promote harmony and to accomplish the goal of belonging to the group.

Overconfidence, Self-Esteem, Self-Effacement, and Choice

Yates, Lee, and Shinotsuka presented intriguing and provocative findings in their cross-cultural comparison of overconfidence,⁹⁴ which hints at a significant insight into the cultural implications for self-esteem and the choice-making mechanism. Their query uncovers cross-cultural differences in the way in which overconfidence about individual knowledge is much more prominent in United States subjects than in Taiwanese. While United State subjects have a stronger tendency to expect their own overconfidence than the Taiwanese subjects, Taiwanese

⁹⁴ Frank J. Yates, Ju-Whei Lee, and Hiromi Shinotsuka, "Beliefs About Overconfidence, Including Its Cross-National Variation," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Process* 65, no. 2 (1996).

subjects are much more likely to expect Americans to exhibit greater overconfidence in their general knowledge than subjects in an Asian population.

The research team elaborately articulates the rationale related to cross-cultural differences in formulating overconfidence. According to existing psychological literature on self-esteem, American overconfidence of one's general knowledge is initiated by one's psychological enhancement efforts and by viewing self-efficacy such as confidence in cognitive competence as a desired outcome. The process deduces the motivations for enhancing the self-esteem that, in turn, energizes individual efforts to help performance. The subsequent sense of self-efficacy stimulates the construction of self-esteem and enhances the performance through affective supports. This finally results in fueling new motivation to the self and consequently plays a critical part in forming overconfidence.

Yates et al., however, are aware that the above consensual view of the role of self-esteem in motivation and overconfidence seems not to fit Asian subjects. They state that, based on their findings, Asians tend to expect modesty among themselves. As collectivistic rather than individualistic cultures, many Asian societies place a premium on interpersonal harmony, which is enhanced by self-effacement.⁹⁵ This does not imply that self-esteem in collectivistic societies is less important among Asians. Instead, it implies that self-esteem in collectivistic societies is determined by a different configuration of self-efficacy and other self-appraisals than in the individualistic context. In collectivistic society, self-esteem is facilitated by adherence to the norm; one should adjust or fit in so that one may view oneself as having competence levels that are representative of the collective.

This study presents us with the implicit factor of cultural variation in the rudimentary

⁹⁵ Ibid., 144.

elements in the development of overconfidence and choice. The authors note that the psychological origin of the prominence of American overconfidence has its roots in the increase in self-efficacy and self-esteem through better performance. This enables us to explain why American subjects are more likely to make choices with greater confidence than East Asians. In contrast, the findings of relatively lower overconfidence in relation to general knowledge among the Asian subjects indicate that Asian collective societies encourage self-effacement as a way to enhance interpersonal harmony. This notably reflects the higher plausibility that Asian people tend to make choices enhanced by self-effacement rather than self-esteem and sometimes self-efficacy.

Risk Preference and Choice

Now I will explore cross-national differences in choice-inferred risk preferences. Hsee and Weber designed their research to address the question of how cultural variation would cause different types of risk preference, which is strictly inferred through choices.⁹⁶ Not only did they compare risk preferences between Americans and Chinese, but they also examined the predictions of people in one country for the risk preference of people in the other country to see whether their predictions were in accordance with reality. The study focused on the outcome of a specific subset of risky decisions, namely people's preference for options with a sure payoff (e.g., winning \$400) over options with a probabilistic payoff (e.g., winning either \$2000 or nothing, with equal probabilities). They proposed that they could measure the cultural disposition in relation to risk preference as revealed by the subjects' choice patterns.

Hsee and Weber hypothesized that people rely on stereotypes about people in a particular country to predict their risk preference. Americans are portrayed in many movies and sports

⁹⁶ Christopher K. Hsee and Elke U. Weber, "Cross-National Differences in Risk Preference and Lay Predictions," *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making* 12, no. 2 (1999).

events as stereotypically adventurous, aggressive, and risk-seeking. Chinese in the media are not usually associated with this risk-seeking image. Thus, the researchers predicted that Americans are more risk-taking than Chinese and that these stereotypes are pervasive in both the United States and China.

The participants in the test responded to the question, "Suppose that you bought a lottery ticket a week ago. You are now informed that you have won and have been given two options of how to receive the money." They are asked to choose between the sure option (receiving \$400 for sure) and the risky option (flip a coin and receive \$2000 if heads or \$0 if tails). How would each person from the two different countries make the choice between the sure and the risky? The test results revealed that, contrary to the prediction of the researchers based on their hypothesis from stereotyping, the Chinese were significantly more risk-seeking than the Americans. In what ways could this be interpreted as a psychological syndrome?

Hsee and Weber explained their results from their recognition of the cultural differences in values and social structures between the two countries. A major distinction identified is that the American society is individualistic and the Chinese collectivist. Individualism emphasizes personal freedom and independence; collectivism, on the other hand, endorses social relatedness and interdependence with others in one's family, community, or other social groups. Compared with Americans, more Chinese live in extended families and have close contact with a large number of relatives. If they are in need, the Chinese can turn to this social network for support. The support means substantive material and financial assistance, which one can usually receive only from family members and close friends. Because of this cultural feature, the undesired outcome of a risky financial choice or decision would be less severe for Chinese than for Americans. As a consequence, the Chinese perceive the risks in the uncertain option as less risky

and hence appear to be more risk-taking than the Americans.

Hsee and Weber coined the term ‘cushion hypothesis’ to describe this cultural syndrome, since their explanation suggests that the close social network in Chinese society serves as a ‘cushion’ that holds its members in case they fall.⁹⁷ The universal relevance of the ‘cushion hypothesis’ in the East Asian context overall is dubious and could be challenged. The implicit significance of the research can be discovered by elucidating the related dynamics between the higher risk preferences of the Chinese over the American, in contrast to the lay prediction and researchers’ hypothesis. That is, while decisions are an interconnected weave of decision makers/stakeholders for collectivists, this cushion enhances your life security or safety if they follow this cultural norm. Consequently, the study suggests that the choice pattern in the Asian context is different from that in the American context, the individualistic culture.

Cultural Variation in Choice-Making

The previous section explored the results of contemporary social cultural psychological research. The cross-cultural methodological approach to the study of choice making has consistently verified that, first, the self-determination theory is not always highly relevant in explicating the psychological mechanism in the choice-making process across the whole spectrum of cultures. It is not universally accepted in the interdisciplinary research that the self (agent) makes choices in pursuit of integrity of the self, or that to make a choice is thus to be self-determined. Insights from cultural psychology encourage us to take into consideration different factors related to the human phenomenon of the choice; due to the mutual reciprocity between the choice and its cultural context, the choice which the cultural psychological methods have illuminated can be characterized as follows.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 172

First, while choice making can be utilized for self-expression in the Western cultural context, it plays a relatively insignificant role in the psychological processes of people from an East Asian cultural context. Second, whereas choice has a high likelihood to embody an individual's conformity to the collective norms in East Asian culture, it strongly tends to uncover individual uniqueness in comparison to others in European American culture. Third, individual choice seems to be regarded as the external embodiment of intrinsic motivation, so as to be more crucial to American independent selves, for whom the act of making a personal choice offers not only an opportunity to express and receive one's personal preference, but also a chance to establish one's unique self-identity. On the contrary, the East Asian is less likely to take advantage of the choice to embody his or her intrinsic motivation. Fourth, choice can be understood as the psychological origin of the prominence of American overconfidence, which has its roots in self-efficacy and self-esteem by better performance resulting from choice. On the other hand, overconfidence about general knowledge has low association with being presented as a tool for choice making in the Asian context since collective societies encourage self-effacement as a way to enhance interpersonal harmony. But, in relation to risk preference, the Chinese show a stronger tendency to seek risk than Americans, due to the 'cushion hypothesis' related to a society whose members tend to share substantive material and financial resources with family members and close friends.

The existing research literature validates the concept of cultural variation in choice making and strengthens my argument about the critical importance of the cultural characteristics of choice making in the East Asian context. However, the primary hypothesis of my research is that these research outcomes have as yet uncovered only partial aspects or characteristics of choices made in the East Asian context. Synthesis and integration of the major characteristics of

East Asian choice-making will be the primary aim of my cultural psychological research. This social scientific survey hypothetically recognizes that there are three fundamental aspect in the cultural psychological research framework that can help elucidate the most distinctive cultural features of choice-making: individualism/collectivism as the cultural frame of reference; the independent/interdependent self as the self system; and holistic/analytic modes of thinking as the framework for modes of thinking.

Choices in Independent and Interdependent Self Systems

Cultural psychology recognizes “I” as a social product as well as the active agent. Depending on how it engages with the society and culture, the self can be differentiated from other selves. Markus and Kitayama’s 1991 research has been recognized as the pioneering work in describing the salient features of the self as independent or interdependent selves. Their research demonstrates the hypothesis that Westerners have the disposition to shape their self as independent and, in contrast, the East Asian as interdependent.⁹⁸

According to Markus and Kitayama, Westerners perceive themselves as consisting of a unique set of attributes that enable them to stand apart and to be separate from others in their environments. They are naturally inclined, therefore, to describe themselves in terms of the singular “I,” an entity which is context-free, in that they perceive themselves as being the ultimate reference point, which implies possession of traits that are distinctive and independent of their social roles. Thus, independent selves strive to achieve independence and autonomy by establishing their distinctiveness from others, by influencing others, and by not being influenced by group and circumstantial pressure.

⁹⁸ Hazel R. Markus and Shinobu Kitayama, "Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation," *Psychological Review* 98, no. 2 (1991).

In contrast, East Asians perceive themselves as being interconnected with and interrelated to others in their social contexts. For such “interdependent” individuals, the focal point is not the inner self but rather the relationships these individuals have with others. Experiencing interdependence entails seeing oneself as part of the encompassing social relationship and recognizing that one’s behavior is determined by what one perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship. In turn, they tend to possess thoughts and behavior determined and informed by the social role dictated by a given context.

The interdependent self therefore pursues the goal of fitting in and adjusting with and conforming to the demands and expectations of his or her social in-groups. Interdependent selves feel more of a bond with, and are more likely to be influenced by, others who are members of their in-group rather than out-group. “Interdependent selves therefore generally make more psychological distinctions than do independent selves among others deemed to be members of their in-group versus those perceived to be in their out-group.”⁹⁹ Thus, what distinguishes the independent self from the interdependent self is, first, their contrasting perceptions of the relationship between individuals and their social in-groups and, second, their contrasting goals for self-fulfillment.

Iyenaga and Lepper, as already mentioned, undertook significant research on choice in the independent/interdependent selves system.¹⁰⁰ They proposed the hypothesis that for individuals possessing interdependent selves, the effects of having one's choices made by others might depend critically on the specific identity of the choosers. In contrast, independent selves should show substantially greater intrinsic motivation and other psychological benefits in the personal choice condition, compared with both of the imposed-choice conditions. To examine

⁹⁹ Virginia Murphy-Berman and Berman.

¹⁰⁰ Iyenaga and Lepper, "Rethinking the Vale of Choice."

the relevance of the provision of choice for the intrinsic motivation of individuals from contrasting cultural backgrounds, they studied the responses of Anglo American versus Asian American children to three basic conditions. In the first condition, children were given a personal choice over some typically small or incidental aspect of an activity they were asked to undertake. In the second test, other children with whom they had no history of a relationship made this same choice for them. In the last case, the children made a choice with someone considered as most trustworthy and in a close relationship to them, their mother. The clear results of the tests were that individuals from some cultures might actually prefer to have choices made for them by significant others. The intrinsic motivation and performance of Asian American children proved highest not in contexts offering personal choice, but in those in which choices were determined for them by valued in-group members. In contrast, Anglo American children displayed higher levels of intrinsic motivation and performance in contexts emphasizing personal choice, relative to contexts in which choices were made for them, regardless of the identity of the other choosing for them.

This research on choice and intrinsic motivation leads to the argument that the provision of individual choice seems to be more important to American independent selves, for whom the act of making a personal choice offers not only an opportunity to express and receive one's personal preference, but also a chance to establish one's unique self-identity. For Asian American interdependent selves, however, personal choice does not seem to be as critical. Rather, for interdependent selves, having choices made by relevant in-group members instead of making their own choices seems consistently more intrinsically motivating, presumably because it provides a greater opportunity to promote harmony and to fulfill the goal of belonging to the group.

The most salient features of the intrinsic difference between independent self and interdependent self are elucidated in dual frames of “inside out,” and “outside in.” Cohen and Hoshino-Browne explicitly validate the difference in the ways in which the self sees through its own eyes in one cultural context and through others’ eyes in the other.¹⁰¹ The former is the so-called “inside out” tendency and the latter is the “outside in.” According to the research, the “inside out” tendency indicates the cultural pattern whereby people view the world through their own eyes. The other culturally patterned type of human experiences—one more likely found in East Asia—is identified as one in which, rather than attempting to perceive first using their own inner resources, the self sees itself and things from an “outsider’s” perspective.

The research frame of “inside out” and “outside in” of Cohen and Hoshino-Browne effectively supports their hypothesis that Asians are more likely than Europeans to take a generalized other’s perspective on themselves. As interdependent self, Asians is higher likely to internalize the external and social norms or values than Europeans, which results inevitably in generalizing their own experiences or thoughts with others rather than differentiating themselves from other’s view. As an exemplary study, they chose two types of projection of emotional perception: egocentric and relational projection. Their work verified that Asians tend to show a relational or complementary projection, in which they project the emotion that the generalized other would have in looking at them onto another person. Thus, Asians tend to represent the generalized other in their heads and take an outsider’s perspective on the self.

This results in a different sort of projection than is found among Westerners. For instance, an East Asian person who felt shame would project a feeling of contempt onto another person, as shame implies that others are looking at you or would look at you with contempt.

¹⁰¹ Described in Richard M. Sorrentino and others, *Culture and Social Behavior* (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005).

Meanwhile, in European groups with egocentric projection there is consistency between their feelings and their faces because they project what they facilitate in their inner resources.

This reveals that, consistent with a salient and habitual representation of the generalized other, Asians project onto their faces the feelings that the generalized other or another person would have in looking at them in the frame of “outside in.” On the other hand, consistent with an “inside out” view of the world, Europeans project whatever they are feeling onto their faces. Thus, compared to the “inside out” tendency among Westerners, Easterners appear to have the “outside in” tendency.

Why do East Asians tend to rely so much upon outsiders’ perspectives while Westerners tend to rely more upon their own? Kitayama et al. provide a good answer.¹⁰² They note that the independent self has the disposition to act out of its own motivation in order to influence others, whereas the action of the interdependent self originates in the desire to adjust oneself to social/cultural norms, goals, and value systems. That is, the independent self intending to influence others cannot help forcing his/her perspectives upon others (inside out). In contrast, the interdependent self, conditioned with collectivism, is more likely to adjust oneself to others so as to develop the social skills to figure out what other members of the society might think and see and then internalize it (outside in).

Now we can consider the distinction between contexts offering personal choice and contexts in which choices are made by others. In individualism, the independent self is striving to be different from others and to establish its autonomy from others, and thus we might hypothesize that the personal choice-making context is more salient since the act of personally choosing necessarily emphasizes the role of the self. The choice of the independent self thus

¹⁰² Shinobu Kitayama, Sean Duffy, and Yukiko Uchida, "Self as Cultural Mode of Being," in *Handbook of Cultural Psychology*, ed. Shinobu Kitayama and Dov Cohen (New York: the Guilford Press, 2007).

would be necessarily more intrinsically motivating, since making a choice allows oneself the opportunity to express one's individual preferences. It also implies that the independent self is likely to make no choice in a situation where others dictate personal choices, since this threatens their expression of uniqueness.

However, for interdependent selves who are striving to be interconnected with others and are determined to fit in with their social in-group, the chooser will be identified not with their own choice, but with the choice made by others. For them, making a choice may be of little intrinsic value, since choice-making contexts may be conceived not as searches for personal preference matches but as searches for options that conform to the socially sanctioned standards of the reference group. Interdependent selves, therefore, might actually prefer to have choices made for them, especially if the situation enables them both to be relieved of the "burden" associated with identifying the socially sanctioned option and, at the same time, to fulfill the highest cultural goal of belongingness.

Relying upon above research and its outcomes explored, it is possible to affirm the second hypothesis concerning the choice making in each of the two types of self. The independent self who is more intrinsically motivated and who holds the "inside out" perspective tends to collect reliable information and higher references from inside resources. In contrast, the interdependent self who mostly identifies with the social values and norms from the "outside in" perspective tends to count more on information and higher reference from outside resources.

I recognize that East Asians are more interdependent in their socialization practices, values, and social behavior than people of European culture, who are in turn more independent. This recognition leads to the assumption that culture affects the way of thinking, so that the self in the two different contexts is characterized by different thinking dynamics. Next, I will

examine the ways in which the two different frames of reference may affect people in the making of a choice: in individualism, a person takes a short length of time to make a choice and decision; in collectivism, a person is more likely to take a long time due to the culture's complicated procedures.

Choice within the Individualistic/Collectivist Frames of Reference

Beginning with the study of Hofstede published in 1980, the scientific measurement of human culture and lifestyle has begun to challenge the assumption that human experiences are universal, freed from their context. Hofstede's survey underlined four dimensions of culture: Power Distance; Uncertainty Avoidance; Masculinity-Femininity; and Individualism/Collectivism.¹⁰³ The dimension of Individualism/Collectivism has had the most popular appeal and has been replicated by several scholars.¹⁰⁴ One of the key strengths of the dimension of Individualism/Collectivism is that it sets the stage for specific and testable predictive models; it establishes the cultural/contextual frame of reference. It is significantly helpful in that it has led to specific and novel predictions about how cultural influence works and its impact on basic psychological processes. The concept of individualism vs. collectivism equips us to capture some important aspects of culture and cross-cultural differences, highlighting what appear to be systematic differences in psychological phenomena between Western and other cultures.

Individualism, as described by Triandis, characterizes a cultural syndrome in which the

¹⁰³ Geert H. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences, International Differences in Work-Related Values* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1980).

¹⁰⁴ Harry C. Triandis, "The Self and Social Behavior in Differing Cultural Contexts," in *Psychological Review* 96 (1989): 506-520; Harry C. Triandis, *Individualism and Collectivism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995); Shalom H. Schwartz, "Individualism-Collectivism: Critique and Proposed Refinements," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 21 (1990): 139-157.

individual is the basic unit of analysis and societal structures are assumed to be of value to the extent that they support individual happiness. Collectivism, on the other hand, describes a cultural syndrome in which the group is the basic unit of analysis and societal structures are assumed to be of value to the extent that they support preservation and enhancement of group resources. In defining oneself, individualism implies that one feels good about oneself as a unique and distinctive person, and so these unique features are defined in terms of abstract traits. Meanwhile, collectivism implies that one's basic self-goal is to gain and maintain group membership and a sense of belonging, so that the self is defined in terms of both group membership and the traits and temperament relevant for values among collectives such as loyalty and perseverance.¹⁰⁵

Given the investigation, the general attributes of individualism may be concisely described: the person is emotionally detached from the in-group, and personal goals have primacy over in-group goals. In contrast, collectivism may be described as follows: the self is defined in in-group terms; behavior is regulated by in-group norms; there is a focus on hierarchy and harmony within in-group; and there are strong in-group/out-group distinctions. It should be noted that no one thinks any given community or society is exclusively of individualistic or collectivistic. These terms mark a distinguishable social system. Nevertheless, a few studies indicate that it is most likely that individualism will manifest in Western European society and collectivism in East Asian (China, Korea, and Japan).

In the light of relationality, relationships in the context of individualism are likely to feel chosen and voluntary rather than permanent and fixed.¹⁰⁶ Relationships thus are flexible enough

¹⁰⁵ Harry C. Triandis, *Individualism & Collectivism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

¹⁰⁶ Daphna Oyserman, Heather M. Coon, and Markus Kemmelmeier, "Rethinking Individualism and Collectivism: Evaluation of Theoretical Assumptions and Meta-Analyses," *Psychological Bulletin* 128,

to be construed, improved, or sometimes left when costs and benefits are unbalanced. In contrast, relationships in collectivism tend to be fixed and ascribed, viewed as “facts of life” to which each member must accommodate. The boundaries between in-group and out-group hence are stable but are invisibly clear and permanent, with interaction between in-group and out-group in the background; the generosity among in-group members is distinctive.

The differences in cognition, reasoning, and causal inference are also conspicuous.¹⁰⁷ Individualism focuses more upon the person by decontextualizing oneself, so that reasoning style is not bound to social context and its information; the cognitive and reasoning process is likely to be separated from the context. On the other hand, collectivism as a cultural syndrome suggests that social contexts, situational constraints, and social roles expected by the society are strongly influential on a person’s perception and reasoning processes, in which meaning is contextualized.

These characteristics of Individualism/Collectivism offer a critical clue to figuring out the way Westerners and East Asians make choice in each cultural context. Westerners, characterized by individualism, are not likely to condition people to take long time to make a choice. The choice in individualism is made mainly by examining inner motivation and personal goals and interests rather than by surveying the social values or opinions of other members in a group. Thus, the choice making relies much upon one’s inner resources, so the process does not take a long time. In turn, the East Asian choice-making in collectivism tends to be a very complicated process, since a choice represents not personal interests or goals, but in-group norms and value systems. Thus, a person in collectivism tends to be conditioned to take three steps: first, engaging with his or her own inner motivation and personal goals; second, internalizing the value systems

no. 1 (Jan. 2002).

¹⁰⁷ Michael W. Morris and Kaiping Peng, "Culture and Cause: American and Chinese Attributions for Social and Physical Events," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 67, no. 6 (1994).

or in-group goals; and third, pondering the effort to integrate both resources in the choice-making process. In the end, the choice-making process in collectivism is likely to take a longer time than in individualism. In short, the complicated process of the East Asian choice requires much time before taking action.

Next, I will discuss how human cognition would interact with the cultural circumstances through the choice-making process. The questions to be answered are as follows: In what ways does the cultural component affect the way of thinking in different environment? How does cross-cultural observation give us crucial clues to comprehending the influence on choice-making? What are the attributes of the naïve dialecticism in East Asian, and how does it affect the making of a choice?

Choice within Holistic/Analytic Modes of Thinking

According to the model of analytic versus holistic thought by Nisbett et al. (2001), East Asians have holistic assumptions about the universe, dictating that, for example, all elements in the universe are somehow interconnected and, consequently, an event or object cannot be understood in isolation from the whole. In stark contrast, Westerners hold that the universe consists of separate objects that can be understood in isolation from one another. Therefore, it would seem to follow that compared to Westerners, East Asians consider a multitude of information in order to explain a certain event due to their attempt at comprehensive consideration.¹⁰⁸

The two modes of thinking seem to be derived from the different types of perception in their cultural contexts. A couple of studies confirm the hypothesis that, whereas Americans

¹⁰⁸ Richard E. Nisbett and others, "Culture and Systems of Thought: Holistic Versus Analytic Cognition," *Psychological Review* 108, no. 2 (2001).

attend more to the object and less to the relations between the object and the field, Asians are expected to be more dependent upon the relation between the object and the field.¹⁰⁹ The investigation of Masuda and Nisbett is worth noting here.¹¹⁰ They showed underwater scenes to Japanese and American participants. Each scene consisted of rocks, plants, small fish, and big fish, the latter of which were brighter and faster moving than others. Participants were asked to describe what they had seen. Most Japanese began by referring to the context, such as, "It looked like a lake or river," whereas Americans tended to refer to the big fish. The most striking observation is that around 70% of the Japanese mentioned the field and the relational dynamic among the objects ("the small fish are going in reverse from the big fish"). This reveals a significant tendency that while East Asians are more sensitive both to the focal object and to contextual information, Americans are more attentive to the focal object and its movement than to background changes.

This perceptual difference causes another cultural inclination, which is that Americans are more likely than Asians to decontextualize an object from its context. According to the investigation of Morris and Peng,¹¹¹ Americans have a strong tendency to explain murders by invoking presumed dispositions of the individuals ("The murderer will kill people no matter where he is"). However, Chinese interpret the same event with reference to contextual factors ("The murder would not have happened if the murderer had married a woman or had lived in

¹⁰⁹ Li-Jun Ji, Kaiping Peng, and Richard E. Nisbett, "Culture, Control, and Perception of Relationships in the Environment," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 78, no. 5 (2000).; T. Masuda and Richard E. Nisbett, "Attending Holistically Versus Analytically: Comparing the Context Sensitivity of Japanese and Americans," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81, no. (2001).

¹¹⁰ Masuda and Nisbett.

¹¹¹ Morris and Peng, "Culture and Cause: American and Chinese Attributions for Social and Physical Events."

Berkeley”). Similar research results indicate that Americans are more inclined to explain events by reference to the properties of an object, so they decontextualize the object from its context.¹¹² In contrast, Asians are inclined to refer to the interaction between the object and the field (surroundings) as explaining the same events.

So far, this investigation has led us to the plausible idea that East Asians are less likely to decontextualize by virtue of focusing on the relational dynamics among the objects and their surroundings. Furthermore, the cultural differences in perception and cognition are most apparent in the ways each member of a society engage cognitively in dialectics. Surveying the historical and philosophical traditions, Peng and Nisbett (1999) describe how the different understandings and attitudes toward dialecticism play a significant role in differentiating Asians from Westerners.¹¹³ In brief, the rational foundation of Western thought, which rests substantially in Aristotelian logic, is inherently characterized by formal logic, which does not allow for contradictions. Under the conviction that there is only one truth, the primary role of Western logic, such as Greek syllogism, is to do away with contradictory propositions in order to reach the truth.

Meanwhile, East Asians have a different comprehension of dialectics and contradiction that is referred to as “naïve dialecticism.” This consists of three principles: the principle of change; the principle of contradiction; and the principle of relationship or holism. The research of Peng and Nisbett demonstrates that Chinese undergraduates show more inclination to

¹¹² Incheol Choi, Richard E. Nisbett, and Ara Norenzayan, "Causal Attribution across Cultures: Variation and Universality," *psychological Bulletin* 125, no. (2005). Ara Norenzayan and Richard E. Nisbett, "Culture and Causal Cognition," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 9, no. (2000).

¹¹³ Kaiping Peng and Richard E. Nisbett, "Culture, Dialectics, and Reasoning About Contradiction," *American Psychologist* 54, no. 9 (1999). For more information, see *ibid*; Kaiping Peng and Richard E. Nisbett, "Dialectical Responses to Questions About Dialectical Thinking," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 9 (2000).

dialectical proverbs than do American undergraduates. Also, Chinese were more likely than Americans to prefer arguments having a dialectical or holistic character rather than a logical structure. When requested to resolve an interpersonal conflict, Americans were inclined to say that one side or the other was correct but the Chinese to say that both sides had some merit.

Several significant implications are embedded within the concept of naïve dialecticism for understanding East Asian perception and cognition. First, the principle of change implies that life is a constant passing from one to another, so that to be is not to be, and not to be is to be. Second, the principle of contradiction suggests that two opposite arguments or ideas are not found to be conflicting or contradictory and in need of being resolved, but instead are viewed as mutually reciprocal aspects of life. Third, as a follow-up to second, rather than eliminating contradictions, Asian emphasize the “middle way” between two opposites or two different propositions.

The above discussions and research results enable us to elucidate the cultural variation in human perception and cognition. Characterized as analytic, the European mode of thinking is first to hold an object exclusively as the focal point, which, second, results in decontextualizing it from the field without taking consideration of the relation between the object and field. Third, supported by Greek logic, Westerners tend to be intolerant of contradiction, which threatens the conviction there is only one truth. In contrast, the East Asian mode of thinking, based on a holistic worldview, is likely first to pay more attention to the field and its relational dynamic with the object. This disposition allows them, second, to be more conscious of the interactions between the object and field. Third, the most salient feature of the holistic viewpoint is found in naïve dialecticism—tolerance of contradiction.

In what ways does each cultural context shape the phenomenon of choice-making

differently? Given the differences between holistic and analytic modes of thinking, how do Asians and Westerners make choices distinctively? It is predictable that analytic perception and cognition give rise to choice making that is less related and interconnected to the context. The analytic agent regards choice making as an independent activity. With regard to handling a contradictory situation, Westerners are highly likely to pursue integration and consistency in accordance with their existing perception of truth or conviction. Thus, Westerners generally tend to rely on internal attributes in their choice-making process.

Meanwhile, the holistic type of cognition enables East Asians to perceive interdependence and interrelatedness between an object and its context. Therefore, Asians facing the moment of choice take into account the effects and aftermath of the choice in terms of relationships and context. This causes Asians to view choice making not as static, but as an ongoing process, since the choice is not a one-time activity, but an ongoing activity that includes related outcomes and results. In addition, naïve dialecticism enables Asians to accept more inconsistency without difficulty in the moment of contradictory and opposite conditions. In fact, we can reasonably predict that East Asian choice is an ongoing process that is characterized by the discovery of points of compromise among contradictory and counterpart conditions. This makes it possible for Asians to tolerate contradictory choices before and after the act of making a choice. That is, even if the present choice is totally opposite to the previous choice, due to the context being perceived differently, it is acceptable to change to the new choice.

Common Journey, Different Choice: East Asian Choice-Making and Its Implications

This theoretical endeavor to verify cultural variations in choice-making began with a survey of the anthropological understanding of culture as indispensable in comprehending the

human situation. At this point, we are ready to ask the fundamental question: Does the exploration of the cultural variation in choice-making pertain to religious and spiritual experiences and practices related to making choices? Is the theoretical validation of the cultural psychological research applicable to those human experiences considered as very subjective and personal experiences, such as the spiritual choice? For this inquiry, appropriate answers to these questions will rely on Geertz's conceptualization of culture as symbol because it is clearly applicable to the research topic. For Geertz, religion is a symbolic system that cannot be independent from the cultural context. Sacred symbols are supposed to function to synthesize the worldview and ethos of the cultural context. The insights from anthropology enable us to speculate that religious ritual and spiritual practices pertain to the symbolic matrix of a culture; spiritual practices or religious experiences, despite their seeming to be part of a totally subjective sphere, could and still should be formatted, affected, and conceived within the symbolism of the cultural context. Thus, this theoretical approach to religious practices is authenticated, including the cultural variations of choice making.

I have explored the various features of the cultural research on the choice in the psychological domains of self-expression, of uniqueness or conformity, of intrinsic motivation, of overconfidence, and of risk preference. As encapsulated in the East Asian context, the choice is less likely to be facilitated for the self-expression of self-identity or for uncovering one's uniqueness; rather, it is highly likely to confirm the social norms or the in-group values, for the purpose of enhancing the communal benefits. In addition, the East Asian choice also tends not to be stimulated by intrinsic motivation, but to be activated mostly through the self-effacement of individuals, in contrary to the activation of self-esteem of Western choice-makers. Most interestingly, however, is the fact that in the study of choices in relation to risk preference, East

Asians (Chinese, in this case) showed a higher likelihood to make a risky choice than did the Westerners, due to their reliance upon the cultural cooperation of the collective societies for their financial needs.

My constructive contribution to this discussion is the provision of a more specific description of the characteristics of the East Asian choice-making process than is found in the existing research literature. First, I argue that East Asian choice making in the context of collectivism tends to be a very complicated process, since a choice represents not only personal interests or goals but also embeds in-group norms and value systems. The process requires three steps: first, engaging with one's own inner motivation and personal goals; second, internalizing the value systems or in-group goals; and third, pondering ways to integrate these considerations with the choice making. Thus, the choice in collectivism is likely to take a longer time than in individualism, since the latter are made by reference only to one's inner motivation and personal goals.

Second, the choice for the interdependent self tends to rely more on information and higher references from outside resources, since the self is mostly identified with the social values and norms for adjustment from an "outside in" perspective, not "inside out." This reveals the strong tendency of the interdependent agent to prefer to have choices made for them by significant others, such as a mother for a child. This is a different dynamic from the choice of the independent self, which is more intrinsically motivated and collects information and higher references from inside resources.

The third distinctive feature of the East Asian choice is a result of the holistic mode of thinking. Along with the naïve dialecticism tolerating contradiction, this mode of thinking makes it possible for East Asians to recognize choice as an ongoing process and to discover the points

of compromise among contradictory and counterpart conditions.

The exploration of the research results of both cultural anthropology and sociocultural psychology offers insight into the significance of the context of East Asian choice making and its implications for the spiritual choice (*election*, in the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*). As mentioned above, the expected outcomes and desired fruits of Christian spiritual practices, in particular *election*, will vary even though the participants share the same program and have the same spiritual directors and supervisors. Because of the diverse stories and unique experiences of God, the participants are supposed to go through the different types of spiritual journey during the course of the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*. This research emphasizes the unique experience of election for individuals. Cultural experiences play a critical role in shaping the election experiences of participants in the *Spiritual Exercises*.

In conclusion it is a safe assumption that the East Asian spiritual choice (*election*) is more likely than the Western to be a complicated process due to three aspects of the process. First, whereas Western *election* seems mainly to be motivated by internal attributes of the choice-maker, Asian *election* tends to be associated with social attributes such as social norms and value systems, so it takes a longer time than Western *election*. Second, while the Asian spiritual journey to *election* has a higher likelihood to collect outside resources as reliable information and references due to the “outside in” tendency, the “inside out” tendency of the independent self enables the Western *election* to collect inside resources. Third, rather than considering *election* as a logically consistent and static event, Asian *election* appears to be open-ended and to be manifested as an ongoing process, thanks to the Asian tolerance of contradiction.

Conclusion

This chapter is the result of a theoretical endeavor designed ultimately to propose the cultural implications of choice, primarily in the East Asian context. As the first stage of the methodological procedure of Pastoral Circle, it made endeavor to describe social and cultural phenomenon of choice making, and further social psychoanalytic information behind the cultural variation. The theoretical and empirical contributions from the field of cultural anthropology are explored initially. The work in this field is indispensable and is the most suitable academic discipline for investigating the mutual interdependence between humans and culture. Drawing on cross-cultural methodology, this study primarily examines the sociocultural psychological inquiries on the experimental topic, choice making and its cultural variations.

An essentialist tone or overgeneralizations concerning cultural variation should be avoided when using cross-cultural methodology. For instance, even though the interdependent self within collectivism is highly likely to rely on a higher reference and match its choices with the norms or values of the in-group, the choice making procedure could be inconsistent and more complicated when the higher reference is not a member of the in-group. Researchers should be careful not to make the assumption that the cultural context of the higher reference and the values of the in-group are the same; they can be different and should not be considered identical.

The universal applicability of the self-determination theory, which assumes that choice making comes to exist by the individual's internalization and self-determination, has been significantly challenged by cross-cultural psychological studies. The distinctive features of the East Asian collectivistic/interdependent selves differentiate the phenomenon of East Asian choice-making from Western choice-making. Their choices are much more likely than Westerners' to reflect not personal or internal attributes, but in-group norms and value systems. East Asian choices also have the extrinsically salient tendency to be motivated by the "outsider-

in” perspective so as to collect information and higher references from outside. In addition, holistic thinking and naïve dialecticism enable East Asians to consider their choices as an ongoing process tolerant of contradiction.

Identifying the different patterns between Western and East Asian choice deepens our understanding of the cultural features behind the East Asian choice pattern. Several critical questions arise regarding the explicit cultural differences. What is the cause of the differences? What are the intrinsic attributes that bring about the gaps between the two types of choice? What kind of philosophical or ideological concepts or ideas might be uncovered underneath the explicit differences?

The next phase of the Pastoral Circle, the research method, requires engaging in analytical social analysis of the described phenomenon by asking a number of questions. For example, which analytic tradition or enterprise is being followed? Are there presuppositions in these analyses that need to be tested? What kinds of socio-analytic symptoms are perceived? These questions of social analysis are embedded in the premise that social problems and issues, although they may appear to be isolated pieces, are actually linked together in a larger system.

This study will investigate Neo-Confucian concepts of the cosmos, nature, the human being, and spiritual disciplines as part of an in-depth philosophical and social analysis of the East Asian cultural context. It stands on the conviction that Neo-Confucianism represents the culmination and synthesis of the religious, historical, and cultural components of the East Asian context. Neo-Confucianism is named as the common denominator and conspicuous cultural phenomenon observed simultaneously in all three of the East Asian countries (China, Korea, and Japan). Also, this specific form of Confucian ideology is the product of East Asian cultural elements that have been synthesized with other religious concepts and ideas that originated in

Taoism, Shamanism, Buddhism, etc. This implies that Neo-Confucianism represents a highly legitimate ideology that is revealed in the religious, philosophical, psychological, and cultural components of the East Asian context. This will shed light upon the religious and ideological fundamentals of the East Asian milieu that are the intrinsic and foundational origins of the choice pattern. By exploring Neo-Confucianism, we will obtain appropriate interpreting frames or tools for describing how the cultural attributes described in East Asian choice patterns originated historically, ideologically, philosophically, and spiritually.

Chapter 2. Self-Cultivation and Sagehood as Neo-Confucian Spirituality: Focusing on Zhu Xi and T'oegy Yi Hwang

Introduction

After more than a millennium of predominance in the East Asian countries of China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, the teachings of Confucius seemed to disappear abruptly from history about a century ago. Confucianism was rejected or denied as a symbol of the premodern worldview, cultural backwardness, and political autocracy.¹¹⁴ The Confucian civilization was severely denounced as representing anachronistic conservatism and an anti-modern world, and at the end of the nineteenth century, its dominance in East Asian history had apparently ended.¹¹⁵ For instance, in Korea, even though the Yi Dynasty (1392-1910) had used Neo-Confucian ideas as their ruling ideology and civilizing impetus for more than five hundred years, the seemingly ever-ruling ideology was dismissed by the last kings in favor of national modernization, and then it faded away, as did the kingdom, with the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-1945).

Remarkably, however, the resurgence of Confucianism in the East Asian countries has been significant during the last couple of decades. It has been reevaluated not only as a source of social and political stability, but also as the cultural basis of the explosive economic growth in those countries in the 1960s and 1970s.¹¹⁶ Interestingly, the Chinese ruling party recently

¹¹⁴ Tse-Tsung Chow, "The Anti-Confucian Movement in Early Republic China," in *The Confucian Persuasion*, ed. Arthur F. Wright (Stanford, CA: 1960), 288-312.

¹¹⁵ Benjamin A. Elman, John B. Duncan, and Herman Ooms, eds., *Rethinking Confucianism: Past and Present in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam*, UCLA Asian Pacific Monograph Series (Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angeles, 2002), 1-32.

¹¹⁶ Rulping Fan, "Introduction: The Rise of Authentic Confucianism," in *The Renaissance of Confucianism in Contemporary China*, ed. Rulping Fan, Philosophical Studies in Contemporary Culture (New York: Springer, 2011), 1-16.

initiated a reappraisal of Confucianism as a path to compromise and harmony for China's multifaceted and fragmented society with diverse needs and voices.¹¹⁷ Korean television dramas and popular music (K-pop) have prevailed in East Asian countries, including Southeast Asia, and scholars have determined that one of the reasons Korean cultural products attract the most Asian people stems from their Confucian values and worldview.¹¹⁸ So, Confucianism (or Neo-Confucianism), having once been considered as a historical relic, is now revived and is providing a renewing frame of reference for life in the first century of the second millennium.

This chapter begins with the conviction that no other ideologies or religions besides Neo-Confucianism have had such a comprehensive and profound influence upon the life patterns, interpersonal interactions, cultural and value systems, and worldview in the history of the East Asian countries. The premise of this research, therefore, is that the Confucian teachings have had an extensive impact upon the political demographics and ethical frame of reference of the East Asian countries for the last thousand years, and these teachings are still currently shaping the core understanding of the self, nature, cosmos, mind, and learning in East Asian countries on the interpersonal, intrapersonal, and societal levels, including the religious or spiritual aspects of life. This chapter's main hypothesis is that a comprehensive investigation of Neo-Confucianism will assist us to cross the threshold in exploring the core of Neo-Confucian spirituality: self-

¹¹⁷ Luichang Wang, "The Rise of the Political Confucianism in Contemporary China," in *The Renaissance of Confucianism in Contemporary China*, ed. Rulping Fan, Philosophical Studies in Contemporary Culture (New York: Springer, 2011), 47-53.

¹¹⁸ Eun-sook Seo, "Identity and the Direction of Korean-Wave in a Multiple Cultural Society," *The Journal of Humanity Contents* 3, no. 14 (2009): 164-165. Seo recapitulates the history of the Korean Wave, which refers to the spread of South Korean culture around the world. The term was coined in China in mid-1999 by Beijing journalists surprised by the fast-growing popularity of Korean entertainment and culture in China. South Korean culture continues to be a significant force in Asia and is making strong gains across the Middle East, Latin America, Europe, and so on. She asserts that the salient feature of the Korean wave originated in the Confucian understanding and values that are embedded in the storylines, characters, relationships, family, and society of Korean cultural products such as television dramas, movies, and K-pop.

cultivation and sagehood. At last, it can explain analytic association with the philosophical and ideological frame of the way in which East Asian cognition and choice pattern has been affected or constructed by cultural tradition and historical frame of reference.

Scope and Nature of the Study: Historical Origin of New Type of Confucianism

Neo-Confucianism, a name coined by the Jesuits in the seventeenth century, is commonly used to identify a period of several hundred years, beginning with the eleventh century and continuing to the influx of Western ideology in the middle of the nineteenth century of Chinese history. The rise of this new type of Confucianism occurred in the context of China undergoing political turmoil and suffering from foreign invasion. Huang delineates four different strands enabling Neo-Confucianism to arise again in new historical contexts.¹¹⁹ The first strand is the response to foreign invasion. Under consistent attack from the non-Chinese of the North, the Chinese scholarly elite began to realize the necessity of fostering national independence, keeping the Chinese people from assimilating with foreign ideologies and influences.

The second strand is associated with the response to the nihilistic ideology of Buddhism. The negative attitude toward life and society taught by the Buddha concerned the Neo-Confucians, who affirmed the reality of life itself. From the Confucian viewpoint, Buddhism's inherent tendency to negate the present life and to transcend birth and death prevented the Chinese people from resolving the critical problems and practical conflicts that they faced.¹²⁰ The third strand is the reaction toward Daoism, which historically had an ambivalent relationship

¹¹⁹ Siu-chi Huang, *Essentials of Neo-Confucianism: Eight Major Philosophers of the Song and Ming Periods*, Resources in Asian Philosophy and Religion (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999), 4-5.

¹²⁰ I am also aware of the scholarly consensus that the Confucian accusation of Buddhism as nihilistic was rather polemic since the Confucians intended to identify their own religion as the exclusively appropriate ideology for national policy and politics vis-à-vis Buddhism and Daoism.

with Confucianism. Confucianism and Daoism, two indigenous religions and spiritual traditions, have consistently influenced and interacted with each other throughout Chinese history.

Confucian adaptation of Daoist concepts and cosmological theories historically occurred from the Han Dynasty to the end of the Tang (B.C.2nd C to A.D. 10th C).¹²¹ While Confucianism had reconfigured its ideology by equipping it with Daoist cosmology and enhancing its spiritual practices, the Daoist emphasis on the hermit-like life restrained its followers from society, which is the locus for embodying their beliefs and values from the Confucian perspective.¹²²

Nevertheless, Neo-Confucianists and Daoists joined in solidarity against the foreign religion of Buddhism, which was very much an alien tradition that ran counter to some of the most cherished values and teachings from the Confucian perspective.¹²³

The last element that led to the revival of Confucianism originated with two scholars of the Confucian school in the Tang dynasty, Han Yu (768-824) and Li Ao (772-841). With the decline in Buddhism that commenced in the later part of the Tang, they engaged intensively with the collection of and commentary on ancient texts largely following the ideas of Confucius and Mencius. Contrary to their precursors who stuck to conventional/traditional interpretations of the classical texts, however the Neo-Confucians of the Song and Ming period were committed to creative interpretations of ethical and spiritual values rediscovered in the traditional Confucian

¹²¹ Ronnie Littlejohn, *Confucianism: An Introduction = Ru*, I. B. Tauris Introductions to Religion (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 101-113.

¹²² It might be inappropriate to characterize Daoism as a hermit-like religious formation since there had in fact been a Daoist theocracy in China. The Daoists had a strong influence in legitimating the regime of the Kingdom during the Tang dynasty. It should be noticed that this characterization was made deliberately by Confucians who believed that they, who were educated in the Confucian classics, ought to be the ones to manage the educational system and to have the role of officials in the administration of the Tang providences. Ibid., 101.

¹²³ The teaching of celibacy, the monastic institution existing as autonomous body outside of secular authority, the doctrine of abstinence, etc. created an unrelenting stream of objections from Confucian scholars. For details, see *ibid.*, 103-104.

philosophy by borrowing certain ideas from Buddhism and Daoism. This turned out to play a critical role in bringing about the renaissance of the Confucian classics by synthesizing the conflicting traditions of Chinese history, thus establishing the last great orthodoxy of China, as well as of Korea and Japan, until the recent era.

This chapter will focus on two notable scholars in Neo-Confucian history: Zhu Xi and T'oegye Yi Hwang. Zhu Xi (朱喜, 1130-1200), one of the greatest of all Chinese thinkers and a prolific writer, was responsible for the culmination of Neo-Confucianism in Song China; Neo-Confucianism reached its fullest development through his integration of a complete system with the doctrine of predecessors such as Zou Dun-Yi (周敦頤, 1017-1073), Shao Yong (邵雍, 1011-1077), Zhang Zai (張載, 1020-1077), Cheng Hao (程顥, 1032-1085), and Cheng Yi (程頤, 1033-1107).¹²⁴ Zhu Xi's contribution to Neo-Confucianism was immense. His version of the classics and commentaries was adopted as the official text for the civil service examinations in China, Korea, and Japan, and his selection of four books—*Analects*, *Mencius*, the *Book of Means*, and the *Great Learning*—and his commentaries on them became the official version of the Confucian classics. Remarkably, Zhu Xi's work dominated Confucian scholarship over the next eight hundred years in the East Asian countries.

T'oegye Yi Hwang (李滉, 1501-1570) has been commonly referred to as the Zhu Xi of Korea or the Korean Neo-Confucian synthesizer.¹²⁵ His philosophical, ethical, and spiritual

¹²⁴ I am aware of the contemporary, on-going debate concerning the degree to which Zhu's thought can be considered unique and different from that of his predecessors. The focus of this study, however, is to construct the theoretical background for the argument that Zhu Xi's work is meaningful because it synthesized and integrated the work of the Song Confucians.

¹²⁵ Edward Y. J. Chung, "A Confucian Spirituality in Yi T'oegye: A Korean Neo-Confucian Interpretation and Its Implications for Comparative Religion," in *Confucian Spirituality*, ed. Tu Weiming and Mary Evelyn Tucker, World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 204; Michael C. Kalton, "Sage Learning," in *Confucian*

synthesis of Sung Neo-Confucianism assured the dominance of the *Songnihak* (the School of Nature and Principle) in Joseon Korea. Byung-tai Hwang comments that T'oegye's reinterpretations of Neo-Confucian doctrines "permanently fixed the nature and character of Korean Confucianism; if it had not been for him, Korean Confucianism would have been very different."¹²⁶ Tu Wei-ming identifies T'oegye as "a major source of inspiration for creative scholarship on Confucian philosophy and its modern scholarship."¹²⁷ As his influence was not limited to Korea, it is said that T'oegye's thought virtually launched Confucian studies in Japan since the *Hideyoshi* invasion (1592-1598).¹²⁸ There seems to be a scholarly consensus that T'oegye's Neo-Confucian scholarship has immensely influenced not just the Korean Peninsula, but it has affected Japan and all other East Asian countries.

Besides these historical contributions, what were the main features of the Neo-Confucian teachings synthesized by Zhu Xi and T'oegye? In what aspects of the Neo-Confucian ideas and worldview can be found a distinctive form of spirituality? How have the philosophical or religious thoughts affected the concepts of sagehood and self-cultivation in the Neo-Confucian context? As the Neo-Confucian spiritual formation, what kinds of the features would the self-cultivation and sagehood be characterized? This paper offers an exploration of these questions in

Spirituality, ed. Tu weiming and Mary Evelyn Tucker, World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest (New York: the Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 184; Sa-soon Youn, "T'oegye's Identification of "to Be" and "Ought": T'oegye's Theory of Value," in *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*, ed. William Theodore De Bary and Jahyun Kim Haboush (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 223.

¹²⁶ Byung-Tai Hwang, "Confucianism in Modernization: Comparative Study of China, Japan, and Korea" (Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley, 1979), 518.

¹²⁷ Wei-Ming Tu, "Yi Hwang's Perception of the Mind," *T'oegye Hakpo* 19 (1978): 467.

¹²⁸ Chong-hong Park, "T'oegye and His Thought," in *Main Currents of Korean Thought*, ed. The Korean National Commission for UNESCO (Arch Cape, Ore.: Pace International Research, Inc., 1983), 91-93. Neo-Confucian scholarship in Tokugawa Japan, which was more devoted to practical matters rather than doctrinal disputes, especially respected and revered T'oegye after the publication of his books, *My Self-Reflections* and *Essentials of Chu-Tzu's Works*.

the context of Zhu Xi's and T'oegye's ideas concerning the concepts of self-cultivation and sagehood. The inquiry therefore will set forth the argument that as the culmination of Neo-Confucianism in Song China and Choson Korea, their concepts of self-cultivation and sagehood encompassed and permeated his core ideas and thoughts on topics such as the anthropocosmic worldview, cosmology, human nature, mind, educational agenda, spiritual practices, society, and nation.¹²⁹ This survey will be the embodiment of theoretical endeavor to explore the thesis that the concept of self-cultivation and sagehood as constructed and synthesized by Zhu Xi and T'oegye is the apogee of the Neo-Confucian spirituality of Song China and Choson Korea.

Attempting to construct this theoretical argument will require several theoretical investigations and explorations in two directions. In the first part of the research, the cosmology of Zhu Xi and the *Tai Chi* 太極 will provide the rudimentary but fundamental outlook of the Neo-Confucian worldview as well as the metaphysical framework. The next topic will be the anthropocosmic understanding of human nature supported by the theoretical dynamics of 性 Nature, 理 *Li*, and 氣 *Qi*. The quest for the Confucian comprehension of the 心 human mind, desire, and emotions will be explored as they relate to self-cultivation in the Neo-Confucian context. Neo-Confucian epistemological questions and methodology will be investigated in relation to the Confucian spiritual practice of quiet-sitting 靜坐 (*chung jwa* or *Jing zou*). The following section will survey 敬 reverence, 致知 extension of knowledge, and 格物 investigation of things as the primary strategies and synthesized agenda for self-cultivation and Confucian sagehood.

The second part of the research will be devoted to investigating T'oegye's philosophical

¹²⁹ The concept of the anthropocosmic worldview is borrowed from Tu Wei-Ming. See Tu Wei-Ming, "The Continuity of Being: Chinese Visions of Nature," in *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought*, ed. Baird Callicott and Roger Ames (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 67-78.

structures, presupposing that his work was based on Zhu's foundation. T'oegye's new interpretation of Li and its implications related to the practical and religious aspects of ascetic contemplative will be explored primarily in relation to the distinctiveness of the Korean Neo-Confucian understanding of self-cultivation and sagehood.

This will enable the unfolding of the main characteristics of the Neo-Confucianism of Zhu Xi and T'oegye Yi Hwang, which will become preliminary but indispensable components for the exploration of Neo-Confucian spirituality. This inquiry will argue that self-cultivation and sagehood are not only the crux of the Neo-Confucian views on cosmology, human nature, epistemology, and education, but are also the ultimate goal and desired embodiment of Neo-Confucian spirituality. In conclusion, we will recognize intrinsic and implicit origin of the cultural attributes of the East Asian choice-making pattern within Neo-Confucian milieu.

Historical Development of Neo-Confucian Self-Cultivation and Sagehood in Sung China

Delineating the major characteristics of Confucian spirituality and its distinctiveness from other East Asian religions, scholars agree that Confucians consider human nature one of the constitutive entities, in addition to heaven and earth that compose the cosmos. The "human" in Confucianism (Neo-Confucianism) is the critical locus for speculation on illuminating the divine, celestial, and cosmic orders, to the extent that "it takes human life itself as revelatory of the divine, rather than 'divine revelation' as the primary reference point for defining the human."¹³⁰ The positive view of human nature as a constitutive element within the triad of heaven and earth and humanity is originated from Mencius' idea that humans have the capacity to embody the heavenly way in their conscience and consciousness. The historical contribution of Mencius to

¹³⁰ William Theodore De Bary, "Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian Spirituality," in *Confucian Spirituality*, ed. Weiming Tu and Mary Evelyn Tucker (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 76.

the Confucian tradition could be characterized by his affirmation that human nature was originally good. While Confucius believed that humans were similar by nature but differentiated by practice (*Analects*, book 17: chapter 2), Mencius asserted that people were born with good potential, and that if this potential were cultivated by good influences, humans would express the full range of virtues.¹³¹ In her introduction to Confucian spirituality, scholar Mary E. Tucker argues that Confucianism (especially Neo-Confucianism) aims at the moral transformation of human nature, since individuals could inherently realize the fullness of the Nature within one's own nature; this makes Confucian spirituality distinctive.¹³²

This affirmation of human nature, however, was challenged by the historical experiences of a particular group of Confucians under the Song dynasty. After agonizing over Buddhism's long dominance of the religious and philosophical scene in Tang China, and frustrated by the fact that no hereditary aristocracy from Tang was transitionally admitted into Song society, a group of Confucian literati attempted to take the opportunity to reestablish the political or philosophical landscape by instituting a set of Confucian centralized reforms. In reshaping the national ideology, the Confucian group believed that all kings and emperors should be required to pursue the achievement of sagehood for the good of everyone.¹³³ Since most kings in the past had not

¹³¹ It should also be noted that Mencius' view does not however imply that humans are always entirely good since the human heart/mind makes one unable to bear seeing the sufferings of others at the psycho-ethical level. This led him to relate the virtue of humaneness to righteousness. While emphasizing on humaneness by equating it with humanity—"Humaneness is what a human is" (Mencius, book 7: chapter 6)—he proposed righteousness as the right path of human nature (Mencius, book 4: chapter 10). In the English translation, I follow D. C. Lau, *Confucius: Analects* (London, Penguin Classics, 1979); *Mencius* (London; Penguin, 2004).

¹³² Mary Evelyn Tucker, Introduction, in *Confucian Spirituality*, 2 vols., World Spirituality, ed. Weiming Tu and Mary Evelyn Tucker (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 2-6.

¹³³ Sagehood had long been a dominant ideal of Chinese thought for classical Confucians and also for Daoists. In general, sagehood in the Confucian tradition may be considered not only as a particular way of looking at the world, but also as an avenue for achieving a feeling of harmony or a sense of oneness with all things. See William Theodore De Bary, *Learning for One's Self: Essays on the Individual in*

developed moral authority through self-cultivation and had illicitly claimed to possess a continuing mandate from the founder of their dynasties, their rule collapsed.¹³⁴ The reforms therefore held up the sage-king as the embodiment of the social ideal by providing a critical moral standard for rulers so as to convert the authorities to a scholar-official government ruled by literati. They deliberately emphasized the Way of the Sages and the Learning of the Sages as the crucial way for kings or authorities to be transformed, in the Confucian way.¹³⁵ These reform efforts, however, failed after only fifty years when a foreign people from the north, the Jurchens, overthrew the Song dynasty in 1126.

As difficulties were encountered, this reform movement pointed to the sage as a personal cultivation of the educated elites and elaborated how people might exemplify the Way of the Sages in their own conduct of life. This redirection received theoretical support from the Five Masters of the Northern Song —Zhou Dun-Yi (1010-1073), the brothers Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, their uncle Zhang Zai, and their close friend Shao Yong (1011-1077). Contrary to another group that was interested in institutionalizing the Confucian sage into the contemporary political system, the Five Masters were profoundly concerned with sagehood as a spiritual ideal. It is broadly accepted that the redirecting efforts were mainly made by the Cheng brothers. For instance, in his essay, “What Master Loved to Learn,” Cheng Yi stressed the significance of learning and the pursuit of ‘learning to be a sage,’ regardless of worldly position or personal

Neo-Confucian Thought (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 37-41.

¹³⁴ Barry C. Keenan, *Neo-Confucian Self-Cultivation*, Dimensions of Asian Spirituality (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 7.

¹³⁵ William Theodore De Bary, *The Message of the Mind in Neo-Confucianism*, Neo-Confucian Studies (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 1.

comfort.¹³⁶ The legitimacy of his description of learning to be a sage not as facilitating worldly ambition but as a dedicated effort for one's whole life is demonstrated by its frequent quotation and acceptance by other Masters of Northern Song as the keynote of Neo-Confucian Spirituality.¹³⁷

Zhu Xi's Historical Elaboration of Neo-Confucianism

The historical implication of Zhu Xi's position might be more easily comprehensible through the insights of the syncretic trait in the Chinese religious landscape. According to the constructive definition of Judith Berling, syncretism refers to "the borrowing, affirmation, or integration of concepts, symbols, or practices of one religious tradition into another by a process of selection and reconciliation."¹³⁸ By borrowing elements to be reconciled, and sometimes radically reinterpreted, to accommodate them to the current worldview, the home religious tradition attempts to gain its relevancy and legitimacy to the contemporary generation. From the viewpoint of the integration and synthesis of Chinese Confucianism,¹³⁹ Zhu Xi's elaboration can be viewed as syncretic work integrating the following not only with the teachings of his predecessors but also with the significant insights of other religions: the religious function and nature of internal spiritual harmony, the origins and impact of mental evil, and the mystical luminosity and vastness of the pure mind from Buddhism; the cosmology from the diagram of the Great Ultimate from Taoism.

¹³⁶ De Bary, "Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian Spirituality," 76.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 76.

¹³⁸ Judith Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en* (New York: Columbia University Press), 9.

¹³⁹ See the detailed descriptions in Berling, *Syncretic Religion*, 14-61.

In this nourishing philosophical and historical soil, the kernel of the Neo-Confucian ideas of Zhu Xi began to be rooted by integrating and synthesizing the legacy of the Five Masters of the Northern Song. As we examine more closely Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian understandings of self-cultivation and sagehood, it is necessary to be reminded first that Buddhist predominance was the main context of Zhu Xi's work. As briefly indicated above, Buddhist teaching on human nature was not affirmative, and the self-realization known as the Bodhisattva was conceptualized as the "transmission from mind-to-mind." Contrary to the Buddhist view of the human mind as empty consciousness, Zhu Xi clarified Confucian distinctiveness by claiming two types of the mind; the "mind of the Way" and "human mind." The former represents the moral nature with which man is endowed by Heaven.¹⁴⁰ It could be featured as the voice of consciences, speaking for the right principles endowed in human nature. The latter stands for aspects of the human's psycho-physical nature, such as appetites and desires, the sources of selfish going against the mind of the Way. Zhu Xi featured the human mind as "precarious" or "endangered," implying that if it were not properly guided by right principles, it would readily become insecure and occupied by selfish desires. The primary goal of learning for Zhu Xi is thus to cultivate and enhance the "mind of the Way" so as to control the "human mind." In this respect, "learning to be a sage," indicates learning to discriminate the mind of the Way from the human mind. The serious request for education and the endeavor to re-constitute the Confucian classics is also based upon Zhu Xi's understanding of the mind, which will be addressed in more detail in a later section.

Criticizing Buddhist teachings as "outside the classics," Zhu Xi initiated the reshaping of what constituted the canon of Confucian classics, since he was convinced that Confucian

¹⁴⁰ Zhu Xi's understanding of the mind is clearly explained in the preface and in discussions of this passage in the *Classified Conversations*. See more details in De Bary, *The Message of the Mind in Neo-Confucianism*, 10-11.

learning was authenticated by the historical classics that could be creatively interpreted and practically examined. Canonizing the four classics of *Analects*, *Mencius*, the *Great Learning*, and the *Book of Means* reflected Zhu Xi's emphasis on the interaction between historical classics and the human mind. For Zhu Xi, therefore, learning is obtained not by emptying and transmitting mind-to-mind, but by active engagement with the canon and figuring out how it relates to individual lives.

Herein, the human virtue of reverence of the classics may be seen. Zhu Xi asserted that one's study of the classics should involve one's own personal reflection on the texts, drawing something out of oneself in the process of engaging the text and making sense of it for oneself. This is called reverence 敬, by which he emphasized respect for the text, since showing respect for the text implies showing respect for oneself and reverence for the Way 道.¹⁴¹ This will be discussed in more detail later.

On this historical basis, Zhu began to construct his idea of the theoretical structure of sagehood and self-cultivation while still young. He was instructed by his father on sagehood as the primary goal and on "Learning for One's Self" as its precondition and priority.¹⁴² Here, "for One's Self" implies learning for one's own self-development and self-realization, rather than learning for mere worldly success. This conception naturally revealed the immense influence of the two Chungs' idea of learning to be a sage. Zhu Xi was faithful to his predecessors' belief that an individual human nature has sufficient internal resources for ultimate self-transformation; one

¹⁴¹ Within the traditional Chinese religion and philosophy context, the Way (Do, Dao) is a metaphysical term in Chinese history, originating with Laozi, who gave rise to Daoism. The concept of Dao was however adopted in Confucianism and Zen Buddhism and more extensively throughout East Asian philosophy and religion in general. In these historical contexts, the meaning of Dao has been signified as the primordial essence or fundamental nature of the universe.

¹⁴² William Theodore De Bary, *Learning for One's Self: Essays on the Individual in Neo-Confucian Thought*, Neo-Confucian Studies (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), x.

can become a sage or a true person through one's own efforts because the potential of being a sage is inherent in human nature.¹⁴³ The redirection of learning to be a sage and self-cultivation was initiated by Zhou Dun-Yi, and it immensely affected Zhu's thinking. In a posthumous tribute to Zhou, *Reflection on Things at Hand*, Zhu portrayed him in conversation with Cheng Yi: "Can one become a sage through learning?" "Yes!" Zhu reflected Zhou's idea that everyone could aspire to become a sage and that even a lay individual could fulfill this goal.

As for the reconstruction of Confucianism, Zhu Xi also recognized that the religious or spiritual goal of becoming a sage could be obtained by learning, that this was not just the innate gift of the specially endowed. De Berry states that what gave special significance to the understanding of sagehood in the Song era by the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi was their view of the sage as not just a lofty and remote ideal but as a model for their own times.¹⁴⁴ This verifies that the purpose of self-cultivation was to lead to sagehood.

If becoming a sage via learning for one's self may be considered the main goal of Neo-Confucianism, how is this accomplished; what activities or steps were considered a necessary part of accomplishing this goal by Zhu Xi? Answering this question requires a comprehensive understanding and exploration of Zhu Xi's philosophical and religious context, since the idea that sagehood and self-cultivation is considered the core of Neo-Confucianism is embedded in

¹⁴³ It is agreed among scholars that Zhu Xi was indebted to both Cheng brothers. But it is true that Zhu Xi's veneration for Cheng Yi was deep and immense. Cheng Yi's commentary on the *Book of Change* was quoted repeatedly in Zhu's *Reflection on Things at Hand*. In addition, Zhu Xi's theories concerning the discipline of the self through seriousness and investigation and the attitude of empirical observation and reflection were the influence of Cheng Yi. For more information, see Hsu Fu-Kuan, "Chu Hsi and the Ch'eng Brothers," in *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*, ed. Wing-tsit Chan (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), 43-57. The 'potential of being a sage' implies that for Zhu Xi, sagehood was the goal and result of extensive learning and moral cultivation, rather than being accomplished by itself. It is thus theoretically possible for all humans, but attainment of the sagehood is achieved by few.

¹⁴⁴ De Bary, *Learning for One's Self: Essays on the Individual in Neo-Confucian Thought*, 37.

various critical aspects of Neo-Confucianism.

Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism

Cosmological Understanding of Sagehood

Without a doubt, Zhu Xi's construction of Confucian cosmology is his most significant contribution to the world. The Great Ultimate 太極 (*Taiji*), despite the fact that the concept had already existed and thus was not his original creation, is considered the critical contribution of Zhu Xi to Neo-Confucianism. The concept of the Great Ultimate began permeating Zhu's work with the composition of his "Commentary on Zhou Dun-Yi's The Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate Explained," in 1173. Julia Ching argues that the concept marks the climax of Zhu's philosophical system since it prepared him to write the "The Neo-Confucian Anthology" (1175), in which he constructed the main theoretical structure and relations between 理 *Li* and 氣 *Qi* in his metaphysics and ontology.¹⁴⁵ Next, I examine Zhou Dun-Yi's *Diagram* as foundational for this paper.

An examination of Zhou's work requires a brief look at the *Book of Change* and its cosmological speculations, since that will lead us to recognize that his work was not created *ex nihilo*. Referring to "the wrap of fabric flex," in the Chinese letters (易經, *yunk-kyung* or *Ijing*), Zhou states that the *Book of Change* reflects the traditional Chinese philosophy's interpretation or analysis of cosmic changes in the natural universe as well as psychic changes in the mind, according to the macrocosm/microcosm of their worldview. The *Book of Change* was originally a divination text. With its hexagrams, judgments, images, and commentaries, it remains one of the most highly symbolic works of the world's wisdom literature, as well as establishing the

¹⁴⁵ Julia Ching, *The Religious Thought of Chu Hsi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 33.

basis of yin-yang 陰陽 thought.

It is generally understood in the *Book of Changes* that out of one primordial *qi* have come the two complementary cosmic “energies” or principles—yin and yang—whose alternation and interaction have led to the evolution of all things. This is confirmed in a commentary on the *Book of Changes*: “The alternation of yin and yang makes up the 道 Tao, the Way.”¹⁴⁶ The fundamental presupposition in yin-yang philosophy is that all creatures in the universe are the manifestation of the dualistic alternation and, furthermore, the human universe is not only a mirror of the natural universe but is also affected by events occurring in the natural universe, which it in turn affects. The origin of this concept is unknown, dating from prior to the time of Confucius (sixth century BCE), but it was systematically organized in the *Book of Changes*. Zhu Xi and his intellectual predecessors were accustomed to this way of thinking and revived the study of the *Book of Changes* to enhance their understanding of the universe around them, human nature, and the metaphysical world.¹⁴⁷

Zhou Dun-Yi is renowned as the founder of Neo-Confucianism, and his contribution is unquestionable in that he took over the classic Confucian term Tai-chi, the Great Ultimate, as the foundation of his cosmological theory. The characteristics of *taiji* implied in Zhou Dun-Yi’s *Diagram Explained* may be summarized in the following three points. First, the *taiji* is the first necessary cause, not merely a name denoting the cosmic origin, without which it would be impossible to explain the operation of the universe. The *taiji* is placed on top of the total structure of the universe, and all things are produced from this primordial origin, which is the first and ultimate principle. That is, the *taiji* is not only an ontologically necessary source of the

¹⁴⁶ Ching, 7.

¹⁴⁷ It should be noted, however, that the concept of *taiji* is not found in the *Book of Change*.

universe, but is also found in myriad things, as its natural manifestation. It represents, therefore, true nature of all things, including human (moral) nature. Second, *taiji* is an enduring, continuous process in terms of motion and rest or the yin and the yang. Third, it is characterized as the highest moral standard of humankind. For Zhou, the *taiji* is not only the ultimate resource of the universe, but is also supreme in goodness. It was later developed into the Confucian moral virtues of humaneness 仁 (*inn*) and righteousness 義 (*eui*).

Following and adopting Zhou Dun-Yi's idea of the Diagram as his stepping-stone, Zhu elucidated the concept of the Great Ultimate in cosmology as well as ontology. He first of all developed the major concept of the Ultimate of Nonbeing and also the Great Ultimate, 無極而太極 (*Mugeuk-yi-Teageuk*). Zhu identified the 無極 Ultimate of Nonbeing as the substance of the universe, which is neither sound nor smell and is incapable of being grasped by perceptual cognition. The 太極 Great Ultimate is the same substance that is capable of generating the world together with the myriad things. He noted that "if this substance is said not to be the Ultimate of Nonbeing, then the Great Ultimate would be considered a finite thing and unable to be the origin of the myriad things. If it is said not to be the Great Ultimate, the Ultimate of Nonbeing would perish in emptiness and absolute quiet and be unable to be the origin of the myriad things."¹⁴⁸ That is, the idea is that both are inseparable and incapable of existing outside of the other. In other words, the Ultimate of Nonbeing represents the all-embracing and transcendent aspect of the ground-providing principle, while the Great Ultimate shows its ground-providing aspect. Since the principle is indefinite and yet definite, it is able to embrace all beings and to provide a firm ground for them.

This assertion led Zhu Xi to articulate the metaphysical characteristics of the Great

¹⁴⁸ Teng Aimin, "Chu Hsi's Theory of the Great Ultimate," in Chan, *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*, 94.

Ultimate as follows. First, he notes the paradoxical and dialectical dynamic of the Great Ultimate, which both synthesizes being and nonbeing and transcends being and nonbeing. That is, in the Ultimate of Nonbeing, all things are present. This is revealed by the operation of heaven, where it operates with neither smell nor sound. Therefore, it cannot be called nonbeing. In addition, the Great Ultimate is fundamentally the Ultimate of Nonbeing since as substance it is empty and tranquil and without any sign. Other distinctive features of the Great Ultimate are summarized as follows: the Great Ultimate is infinite and eternal; it is the highest good and is perfect; it is the highest archetype and final purpose of all things; and it possesses activity and tranquility.

The importance of Zhu Xi's thoughts on this subject for my argument is that they provide the cosmological basis for his concepts of human nature and sagehood. His insights derived from the principle of the Great Ultimate guide us in the process of change in cosmic and human nature, which is understood as a growth process rather than as a static or substantial self-nature. The dialectical dynamic between the Ultimate of Nonbeing and the Great Ultimate is worthwhile to remember due to its significance for the next topic, ontology. This explanation of change as the cosmic order, an enduring and open-ended concept, served as a solid foundation for Zhu's thinking concerning sagehood and self-cultivation; he believed that one can create space to grow and transform oneself by learning for oneself in the Confucian milieu.

Ontology and the Confucian Self

Zhu's Xi's cosmology hints additionally at his articulation of the structure of ontology. The main idea that the Great Ultimate is embedded in the whole being in the universe implies that each individual thing is a manifestation of the Great Ultimate. It also implies that human

nature is already embedded in the Great Ultimate. But in what ways would human nature be related to the cosmic world? Zhu Xi might find the answer to this question in Zhang-zai's contention in "Western Inscription":

Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such small being as I finds an intimate place in their midst. Therefore that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions.¹⁴⁹

This statement advocates that human beings are intrinsically related to heaven, earth, and the myriad things. As the sons and daughters of heaven and earth, humanity is the embodiment of that which is most refined in the creative process of the universe. Borrowing from Zhang Zai, Zhu Xi reminds us that no matter how small a being we find ourselves to be in the vastness of the cosmos, there is a locus for discovering all things are ontologically related and connected with each other. This further enables us to know that the human being has the potential to participate in the creating process of the universe as co-creator, once sagehood would have been attained.¹⁵⁰ Thus, it is noteworthy that Tu Wei-Ming coined the Neo-Confucian idea of humanity as "anthropocosmic," since human nature not only is endowed with the initiatives of the cosmic dynamics but also can participate in the creative work of the heaven and earth.¹⁵¹ This indicates that the human being is holistic in that as the son or daughter of Heaven and Earth, humanity is the embodiment of that which is most refined in the creative process of the universe. This ontological interrelation and interdependence, moreover, is predicated on the cosmology of

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in Weiming Tu, *Confucian Thought : Selfhood as Creative Transformation*, SUNY Series in Philosophy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 497. The quote is from Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 497.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 158.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 149-170.

“great harmony” among heaven, earth, humans, and things.¹⁵² The great harmony embraces nature, which underlies all counter-processes of floating and sinking, rising, and falling, and motion and rest. It is also worthwhile to notice that the profound influence of the *Book of Changes* is embedded in this conceptualization.

Zhu Xi’s ontology was further developed with his doctrine of *li*, or Principle, which explicated the ways in which the Great Ultimate can be concretized in human nature. The immense influence of the two Chengs’ work on the *li* or Principle in shaping Zhu Xi’s Li-Qi dualism is evident here. Despite the two Chengs’ acceptance of *li* as the ultimate reality of the cosmos, Cheng Yi’s conceptualization had a greater influence on Zhu Xi’s concept of *li*, and Zhu Xi developed it to such a significant metaphysical level that it is referred to as the Cheng-Zhu school or the school of *Li*.

Zhu shaped Cheng Yi’s idea that “*li* is one but its manifestation are many”¹⁵³ into his own version. There is one universal principle as the ultimate source of all things, in which there are particular principles, just as there are reflections of the moonlight on all particular streams. The principle is one, but the manifestations are many; this is an important component of Zhu’s philosophy. It elucidates the relationship between the entity and its various ramifications, between the universe and all creation, and between the one principle and the principle found in each and every being. Notably, the theory originated from the theory of principle and manifestation preached by the *Huayan* School of Buddhism.¹⁵⁴ This history suggests the

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ “As well said by Yi-chuan [Cheng Yi], ‘*li* is one but its manifestations are many.’ If heaven, earth, and all myriad things are taken together, there is only one Principle, but each individual object has its own principle.” Zhu Xi, *Classified Conversation of Master Zhu*, 1:1b. The English translation is from Siu-chi Huang, *Essentials of Neo-Confucianism*, 134.

¹⁵⁴ Chiu Hansheng, “Zhu Xi’s Doctrine of Principle,” in Chan, *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*, , 118.

ambivalent relationship of Zhu Xi's theories with Buddhism at that time; Zhu Xi made an effort to argue against Buddhism, but he was deeply influenced by Buddhist teachings. This is the theoretical significance in the history of the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties of China (1368-1644).

For Zhu Xi, li is basically the source of all myriad things belonging to the metaphysical realm, compared to qi, which is the source of all myriad things belonging to the realm of the physical realm. Notably, he juxtaposed li with *taiji* as the ontological foundation. These two terms seem to denote together an ultimate reality that is metaphysically unique, transcendent, imperceptible, infinite, and prior to any physical form in time and space. However, li should still be interpreted in relationship with li-qi dualism, in which sense it is differentiated from *taiji*. Scholars maintain that there are two possible reasons that Zhu Xi did not replace or use these terms interchangeably. First, according to the notion of *taiji*, he made an attempt to bring dualism into an integrated whole, as *taiji* is taken as the "totality of li."¹⁵⁵ As the origin of the universe, Zhu Xi's *taiji* remained as the Ultimate One synthesizing the li-qi dichotomy. This made it possible to extend the interrelationship between *taiji* and other notions such as li, qi, and yin-yang.¹⁵⁶ The second reason for keeping these terms separate stems from the moral and practical reasons that the concept of li was extended from the theoretical into the practical and physical activities in the world of nature as well as in the world of man.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Yu Yamanoi, "Great Ultimate and Heaven in Chu Hsi's Philosophy," in Chan, *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*, 80.

¹⁵⁶ In those relationships, Yin-yang represents the division of the *taiji* into two modes in the metaphysical realm, which takes on the dynamic of change that will occur in the physical realm. On the other hand, on the ontological level, while li represents the normative principle of being, qi evolves and devolves in various ways in which can follow or divert from the li. In the relationship between li-qi, the *taiji* functions as the synthesizer of both.

¹⁵⁷ Huang, 131-133.

The dualism of li-qi then is worth addressing in detail. A synopsis of Zhu's understanding of li-qi is as follows: 1) li and qi exist in the universe as two modes of the universe; 2) li is the Way, existing before physical form and the root from which all things are originated, and qi is the material force, which existed after physical form; 3) li is the normative principle/nature of the being, representing the patterns in which the being is supposed to be; 4) the principle precedes object and it also precedes material force; 5) li and qi are intermingled and inseparable; 6) li and qi combine, and thus a form is created. "Yin and yang are material force and the Five Agents physical substances."¹⁵⁸

In relation to human order, Zhu specifies that the human as an individual thing consist of li and qi. Li resides in human nature and qi constitutes the physical form. The *taiji*, the Great Ultimate, is also concretized in human nature in accompaniment with li and qi. It is however noteworthy that *taiji* does not mix with qi, because while the *taiji* exists in a metaphysical way, qi is always concretized in the physical realm. Human nature is therefore problematic because, even though it inherits the li, it falls short of embodying the perfection of the cosmos because of qi. Zhu Xi recognized a certain opposition between human perfectibility and the presence of evil. Given the Confucian key doctrine that every person can inherently become a sage, whence then comes evil, that ugly fact of human life and experience? An understanding of the human mind and its relationship with nature will help resolve this fundamental question.

The Concept of the Mind

In the philosophy of Zhu Xi, nature 性 (*sung* or *xing*) is identified with the principle 理

¹⁵⁸ Chiu Hansheng, "Zhu Xi's Doctrine of Principle," in Chan, *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*, 118. The Five Agents are fire, water, wood, metal, and earth; this originated from the *Diagram* of Zhou Dun-Yi and the *Book of Changes*.

(li) that constitutes human beings and others. The concretization of li requires the assistance of 氣 qi, the dynamic, material component that gives shape and individuation to all things. The human being, however, is not an ordinary thing; he/she is endowed with another delicate element called *shim* (*shim*, or *xin*, mind), sometimes referred to as “mind-and-heart.” As already mentioned, in differentiating Neo-Confucianism from Buddhist influences, Zhu Xi conceptualized two different modes of the mind: the mind of the Way and the human mind. The former indicates the moral mind endowed to human nature, which is full of principle, while the latter has a precarious status affected by selfish desires. The moral mind is prominent in the *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of Mean*. Zhu’s expositions of these elements elucidate the concept that as nature is full of principle (li), the mind is full of material force (qi); li is called nature in relation to mind, and the mind is called li in relation to things. In addition, nature is like *taiji*, the origin of all principles, and the mind is like yin and yang. “*Taiji* resides in yin and yang and cannot leave them. However, they hold their nature as it is. That is the same with nature and mind.”¹⁵⁹ According to Zhu, human nature transcends mind while being inseparable from it, similar to li in relation to qi. But, mind is dynamic, in contrast to nature which is static or unchanging. The dynamic of the mind is further accelerated due to Zhu’s concept of the two different modes of the mind. While the moral mind endowed with the heavenly way or li presents what the being ought to be in the relational milieu, the human mind is unstably changing according to the capricious movements of qi, externalized in the form of emotions and feelings. This is considered the essential contribution of Zhu Xi’s articulation of the mind; it is significant that he not only discriminated (or discerned) the moral mind from the human mind, but he also proposed that humans cultivate or nurture the former within their nature by controlling the latter.

¹⁵⁹ Zhu Xi, *Classified Conversations of Master Zhu Xi*, 5:5a-b, quoted in Julia Ching, 100.

This has the broad implication, therefore, that the moral mind is responsible for the person, for our nature and emotions through which we govern the body and control the external world.

When human nature offers the guidelines of principle, the mind acts upon them. For this reason, an understanding of the mind is indispensable in delineating Zhu's ideas concerning sagehood and self-cultivation.¹⁶⁰

The other essential discourse to approach the problem of evil is related to qi and its physical endowment. As already mentioned, for the Cheng brothers and Zhu, li and qi are the two realities/facets that constitute all things. For his careful analysis, Zhu borrowed a new term, capacity (才; *chea* or *ts'ai*), from Cheng Yi, saying that nature comes from heaven or li while capacity comes from qi. When the qi is pure, so is the capacity; when the qi is impure, so too is the capacity. Capacity may be good or bad, but nature is good. This idea seemed to enable Zhu Xi to explain qi as manifested differently in each person. Li is endowed upon all human beings equally, without distinction, but qi is endowed uniquely, different in each person. The different endowments of qi explain why each human individual, despite sharing a common nature, responds differently to the outer world. Zhu goes on to discuss the role of emotions in human nature, particularly in the rise of evil:

Nature is the li of the mind; emotions are the movement of the mind; capacity is that by which emotions act in a certain manner. Emotions and capacity are very close to each other. But emotions are consequent to their encounter with external things.¹⁶¹

This inquiry of Zhu Xi develops a four-point logical argument. First, on the human mind, the contribution Zhu made here is not only to clarify the relationship between human nature and

¹⁶⁰ Interestingly, Ching notes in the Neo-Confucian context that Cheng Yi, Zhang Zai, and Zhu Xi all use the same word, which had gathered certain metaphysical connotations from Buddhist philosophy. Julia Ching, "Chu Hsi on Personal Cultivation," in Chan, *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*, 277.

¹⁶¹ Zhu Xi, *Classified Conversations of Master Zhu Xi*, 5:13, quoted in Ching, 100.

emotions, but also to clearly accept the mind as the unifying agent between the two and as the determining agent for good and evil actions. Second, Zhu explains the difference in physical endowments given to each person as due to the different grades of qi. This implies that, depending upon the qi, some might have a purer endowment. Third, on emotion as a consequence of encounters with external things, Zhu offers insights into the question of the presence of evil; when the emotions show excess, it occasionally leads to evil behavior. Therefore, for Zhu, the mind is the unifying agent between nature and emotions, and its role as the determining agent for good and evil actions is prominent. Here, we see Zhu Xi's logical rationale for self-cultivation as a method of self-perfection and for the control of emotions.

An exploration of emotion is important since it is a significant ingredient of Confucian spiritual practices. For Zhu Xi, nature is not directly tangible since it is constituted by the metaphysical principle of li, deriving from the Great Ultimate. It can be uncovered only through manifested emotions. However, even when it is not manifested, it constitutes the mind in Zhu Xi's structure, analogous to the Ultimate of Nonbeing's relation to the Great Ultimate. This is the reason emotions are very important whether they are manifested or not. Since nature is inherently good, emotion contains the possible manifestation of goodness. Zhu Xi's writing resonates with the classic teachings of Mencius when he maintains that the "four beginnings" of virtues (仁 humaneness, 義 righteousness, 禮 propriety, and 知 wisdom) are seven emotions: 喜, 怒, 哀, 懼, 愛, 惡, 欲 (joy, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hate, and desire). These are the visible manifestations of the mind. "The four originate in the mind, but that which makes them what they are comes from the li of human nature."¹⁶²

Zhu Xi's critical contribution to the Confucian conception of the mind stems from his

¹⁶² Ching, 103.

struggle related to the dualistic tendency of the mind. Zhu labored over an intrinsically spiritual problem about the unmanifested mind: How can the unmanifested mind be related to the manifestation of equilibrium and harmony? The problem was identified from the dualistic approach to 未發 *mi-bal*, unmanifested and belonging to the nature, and the 已發 *i-bal*, manifested and belonging to the mind. That is, the mind, in its original state, is pure, transparent, and has reality in itself, belonging to the sphere of the metaphysical. The other aspect of the mind is the mind of the human or the cognitive mind, which comes into contact with external things, responds to them, and belongs to the level of the physical. In brief, according to Zhu Xi, the relationship between these two levels of reality is determined by the mind, which is able to grasp things “out there” and “up there.”¹⁶³ So, he summarized his thoughts on this topic as follows:

The mind is the agent by which man rules his body. It is one and not divided. It is subject, not object. The mind controls the external world, and is not its slave. Therefore, with the mind we contemplate the external things, and so discover the principles of the universe.¹⁶⁴

This reflects Zhu Xi’s anthropocosmic worldview, his understanding of the human mind and further his rationale for the Confucian emphasis on learning as the primary strategy for sagehood.

Meanwhile, emotion is ambivalent and complex. While emotion as good can be the manifestation of goodness, emotions in excess can be highly destructive. It is notable that emotions have the power to do good as well as evil. How does Zhu Xi resolve this? He clearly acknowledges that the four beginnings belong to the order of emotions, but he makes a

¹⁶³ De Bary, *The Message of the Mind in Neo-Confucianism*, 48-51.

¹⁶⁴ Zhu Xi, *The Complete Works of Master Zhu*, 49.28, quoted in Huang, 162.

distinction between the four and the seven by saying that the former manifest li and the latter manifest qi. The ambiguity, however, is somewhat increased by the term 發 (*bal* or *fa*), meaning ‘manifest’ or ‘issue forth,’ since it gives rise to a distance between the four and the seven, and indeed between li and qi. In any case, the ambiguity and ambivalence in emotion and its relations with li and qi were not clearly resolved in Zhu’s dualism. A serious consideration of this topic began much later in Korea that is still incomplete and will be discussed later in this paper.

Desire, a vital component of the human mind, is explicated in a similar way by Zhu Xi. Relying on the dualistic ideology that clearly distinguishes between li and qi, Zhu speaks of a certain opposition between the heavenly principle and human desires.¹⁶⁵ For the moral philosopher, desire dilutes human nature in impure water; it is an obstacle to purifying human nature and the mind. The work of cultivation hence sets its goal as the complete manifestation of the heavenly principle by subduing or controlling the desires. The sage is the person who can eliminate the impediments of his/her own desires or passions, which results in manifesting his/her endowed heavenly principle.

Regarding the discourses on principle, mind, emotion, and desire, it is necessary to remind us that Zhu Xi strove to construct the conceptualization of the sage and self-cultivation on the basis of the *Doctrine of Mean* and *Great Learning*. One of the core statements in the *Doctrine of Mean* caught Zhu Xi’s attention: “This equilibrium is the great root of all under Heaven; this harmony is the universal Way of all under Heaven. Let the state of equilibrium and harmony prevail and a happy order will reign through Heaven and Earth, and the myriad things will be nourished.”¹⁶⁶ This indicates that the ultimate purpose and desired status of all the

¹⁶⁵ Yamanoi Yu, "The Great Ultimate and Heaven in Chu Hsi' Philosophy," in Chan, *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*, 87-89.

¹⁶⁶ This English translation is adapted from Ch’u Chai and Winberg Chai, eds. & trans., “The Book of

elements in the metaphysical and theoretical discourses are equilibrium and harmony. Zhu Xi is firmly convinced that equilibrium and harmony are the fundamental ways that *taiji* and li exist in the phenomenal world, through which the human mind can strive for the Way. They are therefore suggested not only as the essentials of *taiji* and li, but also as the core of the doctrine of the sages.

Ching and de Barry both indicate that the following quotation summarizes Zhu Xi's view on this subject:

The human mind is prone to error, but the moral mind is subtle,
Remain discerning and single-minded; keep steadfastly to the Mean (or equilibrium).¹⁶⁷

This quote makes it clear that the primary state of the sage's mind and the foremost aim of self-cultivation should be, in Neo-Confucian terms, equilibrium or harmony.¹⁶⁸ Embodying the way of *taiji* or li in human nature presupposes ceaseless human effort to cultivate the moral mind by enhancing the good emotions, subduing their negative aspects, and controlling selfish desires. The appropriateness of individual human effort may be discovered here in Zhu Xi's theoretical system.

Since the ultimate goal of the doctrine of the sage is identified and the human mind, emotion, and desire have already been discussed, the significant questions that face us at this point are: How can a human attain equilibrium and harmony in relation to heaven, earth, and the myriad things? What are the specific ways to accomplish the way of sagehood and self-cultivation? Zhu proposes the cultivation of (1) reverence through quiet sitting, a form of

Mean," in *The Sacred Books of Confucius and Other Confucian Classics* (New York: University Press, 1965), 306.

¹⁶⁷ Ching, 114; de Bary, "Chu Hsi's Spirituality," 81. This translation is from Ching.

¹⁶⁸ Ching asserts that Zhu Xi's teaching on equilibrium or harmony is the heart of his philosophy. Ching, 116.

meditation and self-examination, and (2) the investigation of things through extensive knowledge. He claims that this dual formula can contribute toward the state of harmony or equilibrium, embodying the way of *taiji* or *li*.

The Way of Self-Cultivation: Quiet-sitting, Reverence, and Investigation of Things

Our discussion brings us now to the Neo-Confucian methods of self-cultivation and sagehood that are synthesized in Zhu Xi's system. The achievement of sagehood by self-cultivation is the ultimate aim of the Neo-Confucian philosophical and religious construction and the culmination of its moral philosophy. The following discussion explores Zhu Xi's understanding of meditation and its role in learning, self-cultivation, and sagehood.

Zhu Xi doubtlessly recognized the important role of quiet-sitting, 靜坐 (*jung-jwa* or *ching-tso*) in his method of self-cultivation by virtue of his own practice and teaching. It is broadly accepted that Zhu Xi also practiced Taoist and Buddhist meditation for many years under the influence of his teacher Li Yen-ping (1093-1163), who was a student of Cheng Yi. This would appear to indicate that the practice may have originated with Cheng Yi and was later transmitted to Zhu Xi. Despite insufficient evidence to demonstrate the direct influence of the Taoist and Buddhist meditation methods, it is quite obvious that many Neo-Confucians studied and gained insights from these spiritual traditions that influenced their meditation methods or ideas. The initial purpose of Zhu Xi's quiet sitting was associated with the practicality of learning introduced by the two Chungs.¹⁶⁹ The Chungs stressed that authentic learning is supposed to be accompanied by responsive actions, rather than simply accumulating knowledge.

¹⁶⁹ Rodney Leon Taylor, *The Confucian Way of Contemplation: Okada Takehiko and the Tradition of Quiet-Sitting*, Studies in Comparative Religion (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 34-36.

Practicing quiet sitting thus establishes the foundation of a unified mind without obstacles imposed by emotional stirrings or selfish desires. It can help one restore and maintain the original purity of the mind endowed by li or *taiji* so that one is able to act upon the knowledge or information unifying at the center of life. In other words, quiet-sitting enables one to unify action with contemplation.

Zhu Xi's initial ideas about quiet-sitting, however, were changed considerably due to a pivotal encounter with Hu Hung (1106-1161) during the period while he was establishing the new conceptualization of mind discussed previously.¹⁷⁰ Contrary to the existing (previous) understanding of the practice of quiet-sitting as a means toward experiencing the unmanifested mind, Zhu Xi shifted the role of quiet-sitting into a complementary one, since exclusive focus on the unmanifested mind was highly likely to miss the integration between action and contemplation. Zhu Xi's ideal practice is summarized by this remark in the *Classified Conversation*: "the practice of spending half a day in quiet-sitting and half a day reading book."¹⁷¹ This may seem to be an inordinate amount of time spent in meditation, but the real intent of the passage is to suggest that the function of quiet-sitting is as a quiet complement to study rather than a practice exercised for its own sake for an exploration of the unmanifested mind. Herein one of the main themes emerges that is essential for Zhu Xi's learning: the necessity of balancing study and quiet sitting.

For Zhu Xi, learning means progress towards sagehood. Study itself is aimed at the process of uncovering the true nature, leading ultimately toward the state of sagehood. The fact

¹⁷⁰ Zhu Xi's emphasis on meditation was accompanied by his theoretical construction in resolving the theoretical conflicts of 未發 *mi-bal*, the unmanifested mind, and its relation with 已發 *i-bal*, the manifested.

¹⁷¹ Quoted in Ching, 121. This quote is from Yen Yuan, *A Critique of Chu Hsi's Classified Conversations*, 2b: 18b.

that Zhu Xi considered quiet sitting as complementary to learning reflects the role it plays in self-understanding and self-realization. Namely, it serves as a model of learning and self-cultivation that sees study as part of the learning process.¹⁷² Given this understanding, Zhu Xi was firmly convinced that meditation is not an end in itself but a means to an end, to achieve an attitude of 敬 (*kyung, jing*), or reverence. Meditation cannot be the ultimate way to attain self-cultivation per se since an interior disposition cannot be manifested until reverence is applied to one's actual life.

The concept of reverence sheds light upon the primary avenue of self-cultivation.¹⁷³ Following Cheng Yi's teachings, Zhu Xi characterized 'reverence' in terms of single-mindedness and freedom from the distraction of emotions and desires.¹⁷⁴ He also associated it specifically with the teaching of 'vigilance in solitude,' or interior vigilance, in the *Doctrine of the Mean*. Another source indicates that Zhu Xi alerted his disciples against a 'dead' reverence, which merely keeps the mind attentive without also attending to moral practice.¹⁷⁵ Zhu Xi further developed the meaning of reverence into the central idea of the concept of self-cultivation within his theoretical system:

Reverence does not mean one has to sit stiffly in solitude, the ears hearing nothing, the eyes seeing nothing, and the mind thinking of nothing . . . it means rather keeping a sense of caution and vigilance and not daring to become permissive.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Taylor, 38.

¹⁷³ The term *kyung* has been translated in diverse ways as sincerity, composure, or seriousness. I view reverence as the most relevant translation.

¹⁷⁴ Judith Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en* (New York: Columbia University Press), 105.

¹⁷⁵ Julia Ching, "Chu Hsi on Personal Cultivation," in Chan, *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*, 280.

¹⁷⁶ Zhu Xi, *The Classified Conversation*, 12:10b, as quoted in Ching, *The Religious Thought of Chu Hsi*, 123.

The core features of reverence in Zhu Xi can be recapitulated as follows.¹⁷⁷ First, reverence implies “preserving the mind” from being dissipated; when the mind is focused outward, it should draw inward; when it is interior, it should push outward. Second, reverence as vigilance in solitude assists the mind to understand all the principles (li), eliminating selfish desires. Third, Zhu Xi continued the core ideas of Cheng Yi that cultivation demands the practice of reverence, particularly the notion of nurturing the mind with the goal of harmony of the emotions leading to sagehood. That is, any aspirant to sagehood needs to nurture goodness of mind and to pursue the mind’s harmony with the emotions. Fourth, the inner disposition of reverence is considered the essential ingredient for the self-conquest of negative aspects and for self-perfection. The aim of self-conquest is to nurture the heavenly principle by overcoming human desires so as to assist in the task of reverence. And finally, reverence is thought of as the inner disposition necessary in the quest for a morally good life, as reflected by external behavior.

Notably, Julia Ching states that the notion of reverence is comparable to that of ‘recollection’ in Christian spirituality. She defines recollection as a technical term in spirituality referring to the “‘collecting’ or ‘gathering’ of one’s interior faculties, keeping them silent and ‘recollected’ in an atmosphere of peace and calm, in preparation for formal prayer or in an effort to prolong the effects of such prayer.”¹⁷⁸ Similar to this idea, Zhu’s notion of reverence encompasses the recollection of the mind, not allowing it to be distracted. While Christian recollection requires taking the next step to encounter transcendence, or God, Neo-Confucian reverence suggests a different route for the purpose of becoming a sage.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 124-126.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 124.

The way of sagehood and self-cultivation harnessed with the practice of quiet sitting and reverence accomplish the extension of knowledge. While rectification of the mind equipped with reverence is a moral activity, the extension of knowledge is an intellectual activity aimed at self-cultivation. As a matter of fact, Zhu Xi's core idea of self-cultivation through the extension of knowledge began with Cheng Yi's formula, "Self-cultivation requires reverence; the pursuit of learning depends on the extension of knowledge."¹⁷⁹ Rather than separating these two aspects of Cheng's way, however, Zhu Xi reformulated the statement using the concept of simultaneity; the practice of reverence and extension of knowledge must begin at the same time.¹⁸⁰ The new formula required Zhu to introduce the concept of 格物致知 (*kyuk-mul*, *chi-ji* or *gewu*, *zhizhi*), the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge. On the surface, two different elements may be perceived, but they are two different descriptions of the same operation of seeking to discover the 'principles' of things: *kyuk-mul* is a more explicit expression of the object of investigation, while *chi-ji* is more about knowing the subject.

For Zhu Xi, the term 'knowledge' refers primarily to the moral knowledge of goodness through the practice of reverence. That is, the intellectual activity of *kyuk-mul* and *chi-ji* must be pursued in a spiritual state of reverence. Then, the principles or *li* of things become known; the endowed but veiled nature of the cosmos can be revealed and uncovered through the consistent investigation of things and the extension of knowledge. At this point, the mind comes to know the truth of principles, and the truth itself eventually also modifies the mind, making it manifest. If one cannot preserve one's mind in a state of reverence, neither will one be able to investigate principles nor extend one's knowledge. This circular operation is an endless, ongoing process in

¹⁷⁹ Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 1963), 562.

¹⁸⁰ Ying-Shih Yu, "Morality and Knowledge," in Chan, *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*, 230.

the life of every truly confirmed Confucian. The mutual interaction between the mind and all principles fully shapes each other. It is through this spiritual journey that a Confucian seeks for his moral nature to attain perfection.¹⁸¹

We now move toward the kernel of Zhu Xi's way of self-cultivation, by which the interdependence of the concept of reverence and the extension of knowledge and the investigation of things is elucidated. The reverent mind is capable of discovering the li or principles and of extending its knowledge; this process illuminates the mind and manifests it so as to purify the human mind in relation to the inherent nature, which is the principle, or li, as well as to strengthen the moral mind so it can govern the human mind. The ultimate aim of the task of the extension of knowledge and the investigation of things is to develop the moral mind sufficiently to realize one's nature and to know the heavenly principle, *taiji*. The metaphysical interpretation of the mind and nature, the principle of things, and the heavenly principle are all utilized in unfolding the intrinsic, spiritual dynamic of self-cultivation and the cultivation of sagehood. This is revealed in Zhu Xi's theoretical and philosophical writings from the *Book of Mencius* to the *Great Learning*¹⁸² and is regarded as Zhu's historical contribution to the synthesis of Neo-Confucianism in Song China. Next, I will explore the Confucian spirituality of Zhu Xi and suggest practical implications for spiritual discernment in the Neo-Confucian world.

Zhu Xi's Spirituality in Self-Cultivation and Sagehood

It is noteworthy that William de Bary elaborates several features of Neo-Confucian

¹⁸¹ The crucial function of book learning in Zhu Xi's formula is also recognized in this paper as a strategy for self-cultivation. The primary goal of reading a book is to contemplate further the meaning of nature embedded in the universe.

¹⁸² Ching, *The Religious Thought of Chu Hsi*, 127-128.

spirituality in his book, *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, and he notes that Zhu Xi's *The Neo-Confucian Anthology* (or *Reflections of Things at Hand*) presents the most important manual on the teachings related to this topic.¹⁸³ The first feature highlighted by de Bary is a reverent attitude toward life, heaven, neighbors, and all creation. This reverence expresses itself in taking things seriously and considering one's actions carefully in terms of their effect upon other living beings and of one's responsibilities toward others. Second, along with this basic concern and sympathy for others, there should be a natural and spontaneous joy in life. Reverence and its proper conduct should produce joy and gladness of spirit, which comes from one's conscience. The third feature is unselfish service of others, which frees one from the anxieties that generate self-centered, egotistical ambition. Liberation from selfishness is the fourth feature, which allows one to attain a state of poise and serenity achieved through constant effort and self-discipline in the conduct of life. In this way, the natural principle of heaven is manifested. In the end, this results in a process of becoming identified with heaven, with the reality of a moral and creative universe, so that the virtue of heaven manifests in one's own life.

These characteristics serve to establish a clear contrast between the Buddhist and Taoist traditions and Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism—between the Buddhist preoccupation with death and suffering and Zhu Xi's celebration of life and joy; between the Buddhist view of the human order as illusory and Zhu's affirmation of its concrete reality, essential goodness, and rationality; between the Taoist search for immortality and the Neo-Confucian acceptance of the here and now as sufficing for human fulfillment; between the Buddhist preoccupation with the problem of self and identity and Zhu's unselfish self-realization in the meeting of one's basic human responsibilities.

¹⁸³ William Theodore De Bary, *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 153-160.

The theoretical articulation of Confucian religiosity by Mary Evelyn Tucker also adds insights to this study.¹⁸⁴ With an appreciation of the notion of the anthropocosmic worldview, coined by Tu Wei-Ming,¹⁸⁵ she maintains that in the consideration of the cosmological context, priority must be given to the moral and spiritual cultivation of the individual. She sees cosmology as the other pillar constituting Confucian religiosity, along with self-cultivation, and the interaction of these two characteristics gives Confucian religiosity or spirituality its distinctive flavor. According to Zhu Xi's investigation of cosmology, the metaphysical triad of heaven, earth, and human being enables self-cultivation with a cosmological grounding to lead to an experience of the connection to other beings and to the universe at large. The possibility of growth can be grasped in the relational reality between cosmology and self-cultivation, which results in our realizing that we are united with heaven, earth, and other human beings.

Julia Ching suggests that 仁 humaneness is the culmination of Zhu Xi's holistic spirituality through which the "whole substance and great functioning" of human nature is realized.¹⁸⁶ Differentiating humanity as the principle (substance) of love from love as the functioning of humanity, she analyzes which features of Zhu Xi's holistic spirituality originate from humaneness or humanity, which forms "one body with Heaven, earth and all things," writing that its authenticity is vindicated not by subjective experiences or mystical feelings, but by loving actions in a particular case.

On the basis of these studies, I conclude that several core elements of Neo-Confucian

¹⁸⁴ See Tu Wei-Ming, "The Continuity of Being: Chinese Visions of Nature," in Baird Callicott and Roger Ames, eds., *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 67-77.

¹⁸⁵ Mary Evelyn Tucker, "Religious Dimensions of Confucianism: Cosmology and Cultivation," *Philosophy East and West* 48, no. 1 (Jan., 1998).

¹⁸⁶ De Bary, "Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian Spirituality," 91-93.

spirituality are synthesized in Zhu Xi's idea of sagehood and self-cultivation. Most of all, Zhu Xi's cosmology uncovers the dialectical aspect of the spirituality in the dualistic entities and the dynamic between yin and yang, manifested and unmanifested, rising and falling, and motion and rest. The dialectic nature blurs the boundary between transcendence and immanence in which Western Christian spirituality has its conceptual and spiritual foundation of deity. Instead of seeking for the transcendent being or mystical experience, Neo-Confucian spirituality emphasizes the transcendent immanence of life. Then, in the ontological sphere, it suggests that no being in the cosmos is static with an accomplished form. Being is viewed as process and change; all being is not-yet-finally-formed. The cognitive dimension in the dialectic world does not make an effort to discover a finite fact nor to consider it as truth; instead, Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian spirituality pursues a balance among the dualistic or different aspects of the world for interior harmony. The moral or ethical values of Neo-Confucianism thus question not what ought to be, but how to be. This is the reason that specific guidelines or directions are rare in relation to sagehood and self-cultivation, except for the aforementioned emphasis on harmony and equilibrium.

The second fundamental aspect of Zhu Xi's spirituality is that it may be identified as holistic. It is grounded in a positive perspective on human nature. It holds open the possibility that all human beings can be self-cultivated and self-transformative since all are inherently endowed with the heavenly nature, *li*, principle. Thus, human nature embodies the heavenly principle within but it becomes a constitutive component of the creative works of the cosmos, or anthropocosmic being. Every individual—including its being, activity, knowledge, mind, and emotion—is meaningful due to its embodiment of the cosmic workings. All aspects of the human being have the potential to manifest the cosmic truth and therefore the holistic aspect of life. As a

result, the intrapersonal, interpersonal, societal, communal, and cosmic dimensions in Neo-Confucianism are remarkably conspicuous in the vision of sagehood and in the methodology of self-cultivation. The holistic cultivation of sagehood encompasses both time and space. A Neo-Confucian seeking to become a sage is sensitively conscious of every moment in all situations that are revelatory of the time and space of the principles. The vital methods of learning for self-cultivation—quiet sitting, reverence, and the extension of knowledge and investigation of things—are indeed comprehensive faculties by which the human being can realize the holistic spiritual features within her/his mind and nature.

Deliberately developed from this holistic aspect, Zhu Xi's spirituality has interdependent and interconnected characteristics as its third feature. Related to the dialectical nature of being, the existence of any one entity could not be presupposed without the existence of any other; it firmly presupposes the mutual dependence and connection with each other. Human nature, as an anthropocosmic being, is premised on the interdependent and interconnected relationship among heaven, earth, and human beings. Since all things and beings are interconnected, a Confucian seeker would never engage him/herself carelessly or negligently, but would with reverence investigate things, making an effort to discover the hidden principles endowed in all things as the way for cultivating and further transforming him/herself. The person is significantly realized in the interdependence and interconnectedness of life so that positioning oneself, one's thought, one's feelings and one's actions in the way of harmony and equilibrium is the most critical task for self-cultivation and sagehood.

Those core features would seem to indicate that Neo-Confucian sagehood and self-cultivation are somewhat similar to the 'spiritual indifference' of Christian spirituality. Spiritual indifference indicates that the interior state is liberated from all movements, spirits, thoughts,

emotions, and desires; there is nothing but equilibrium. The term is used specifically to accompany the making of a spiritual choice, following the divine will in the context of the Ignatian spiritual tradition. The principle of indifference does not mean an affective distancing from or a dismissal of creative reality; rather, it implies a psycho-religious balance before one commits oneself to the use of any creature.¹⁸⁷ Its extensive and practical usage in spiritual direction implies, however, an essential spiritual capacity for spiritual discernment.

The primary features of Zhu Xi's spirituality in sagehood and self-cultivation remind us of the way he portrayed Zhou Dun-Yi, whose mind he described as "free, pure, and unobstructed, like the breeze on a sunny day and the clear moon." Zhu explains that this was the result of Zhou's being completely at harmony with the principles of nature, free from any selfishness or impurity.¹⁸⁸ This depiction seems concise but profoundly accurate in describing a Confucian sage and is very close to what Zhu Xi would seek for in his theoretical construction of sagehood and self-cultivation.

Now I will discuss Korean Neo-Confucianism, which transformed the Chinese tradition in the context of a socially and spiritually different indigenous culture. Other than China, Korea is considered to be the first country in which Confucianism exerted sweeping influence in East Asia.

Korean Implementation of Neo-Confucianism

Korea has traditionally prided itself on being a more orthodox Confucian nation than

¹⁸⁷ *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, s.v. "Indifference." Howard Gray, "Indifference," in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 367.

¹⁸⁸ De Bary, *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, 158.

China, the homeland of Confucianism. This pride has something to do with the historical fact that the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910) proclaimed Neo-Confucianism as the ruling and political ideology of the new kingdom. For nearly five hundred years, Neo-Confucians played a notable role not only in the creation of a new regime and in the formulation of its institutions, but also in reshaping and remodeling Korean society and its people. Even though the Neo-Confucian civilization was denounced by the last kings of the Yi dynasty during the Japanese occupation (1910-1945) as representing anachronistic conservatism and the pre-modern world, its predominance in Korean history and tradition has been notable in crucial aspects of Korean individuals and society, ranging from interpersonal relations and family formation to ritual, ceremonial, and educational systems and gender roles in the societal and communal culture and consciousness.¹⁸⁹

The Confucian influence began to be felt before the Joseon dynasty, followed by a period during which Koreans, making no particular cultural or ideological commitments, pragmatically borrowed specific aspects of the Chinese system.¹⁹⁰ Korea's initial encounter with Confucianism was recorded in the *Samkuk Saki* (Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms), which commented that that a national academy (teahak) where sons of the nobility studied the Confucian classics was established in 372 CE. The transmission of the Confucian classics such as the *Books of Poetry and Rites*, and the *Zuo Zhuan* (Commentary of Zuo) immensely helped Confucianism take firm root and become the center of learning and Confucian cultural reception in the Korean

¹⁸⁹ Jahyun Kim Haboush, "The Confucianization of Korean Society," in *The East Asian Region*, ed. Gilbert Rozman (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 84-110.

¹⁹⁰ See the detailed account of the historical background in Edward Y. J. Chung, *The Korean Neo-Confucianism of Yi T'oegye and Yi Yulgok: A Reappraisal of the "Four-Seven Thesis" and Its Practical Implications for Self-Cultivation*, ed. Sung Bae Park, SUNY Series in Korean Studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 1-18; Littlejohn, *Confucianism: An Introduction = Ru*, 115-119.

Peninsula.¹⁹¹ Even though Confucian scholars had been active in government, education, and academic learning since the beginning of the Koryo dynasty (918-1392), Confucianism was not yet the dominant force in Korean culture. Instead, Buddhism was considered the state religion. However, toward the end of the Koryo era and the launching of the new dynasty—the Joseon—Confucian scholars made it their priority to revive Confucianism and to reject and criticize Buddhism.¹⁹² To accomplish their aim, they paid remarkable attention to the introduction of the Cheng-Zhu School to Korea.¹⁹³ The comprehensive theoretical articulation of the new Confucianism ranging from cosmology, morality, and philosophy to religious practices convinced the Korean literati that it was a viable alternative to Buddhism and to the old ruling ideology of the previous dynasty. With the new beginning of the Yi dynasty, as the Korean commitment to Neo-Confucianism deepened, the Confucian system was no longer perceived as merely foreign, but came to be viewed as the truth from which all civilized peoples should draw sustenance. Sa-Soon Yun affirmed that outside its country of origin, China, Korea was perhaps regarded as the first country where Neo-Confucianism swept over whole aspects of society:

Korean Confucianism clearly contributed to the formation of a sense of national selfhood and sovereignty and became an important force in the unfolding of Korean history. It has provided a universal cultural consciousness that has given rise to a value system directly related to a highly developed view of ethics and politics and has helped stimulate a unique national consciousness directly related to the existence and future prosperity of the Korean people.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Xinzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 116.

¹⁹² The scholarly consensus is that Confucian scholars and politicians considered Buddhism the source of the political corruption in the Koryo dynasty and therefore devalued its religious or philosophical ideas in their ruling ideology.

¹⁹³ An Hyang (1243-1306), Chung Mong-ju (1320-1392), Yi Saek (1328-1395) and Kil Chea (1353-1418) contributed greatly to a systematic introduction of the Cheng-Zhu School to Korea.

¹⁹⁴ Sa-soon Yun, "Confucian Thought and Korean Culture," in *Korean Cultural Heritage* (Seoul: The

During the Yi dynasty, Korean Neo-Confucianism was characterized by a strong commitment to Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy and focused more on the study of [human] nature and principle, the so-called *Songnihak* or *Dohak* (the learning of the Way), contrary to the prevailing disapproval of the Wang Yang-Ming school of the Mind.¹⁹⁵ The Neo-Confucian devotion to Cheng-Zhu culminated with the great scholars Yi Hwang (better known by his pen name, T'oegye, 1501-1570) and Yi I (Yulgok, 1536-1584). Having accepted Cheng-Zhu's interpretations of Confucian teachings, these scholars, however, engaged with the creative debates and argument within the Korean context, so as to characterize the Korean Neo-Confucianism as distinctive from the Chinese or Japanese forms.

Especially with regard to the relation between li, principle, and qi, material force, different understandings and interpretations intensified the debates among Neo-Confucian scholars. That is, the so-called "Four-Seven Debate," first engaged in by T'oegye and one of his disciples, Ki Teasung (Kobong, 1527-1572), was unique to Korean Neo-Confucianism. One of the primary topics debated was the metaphysical and psychological complexity of human nature and emotions, in the form of the relationship between the Four Beginnings ('the four sprouts of virtues' or 'the four innate good dispositions,' Mencius, 2A:6) and the Seven Emotions (joy, anger, grief, fear, love, hate, and desire). In the historical debates, T'oegye attempted to clarify the appropriate relationship between the li and qi, and between the original nature and the physical nature, plus the role of emotions within Zhu's cosmology. The subsequent debates were held by Yulgok and his friend Song Hon (Ugye, 1535-1598). Uncomfortable with the dualistic

Korean Foundation, 1996), 115.

¹⁹⁵ William Theodore De Bary and JaHyun Kim Haboush, *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*, Neo-Confucian Studies (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 8-17.

articulation, Yulgok attempted to elucidate the interdependent relations between the heart/mind of the Way and the human mind. These remarkable series of debates were the vehicle through which Korean Neo-Confucian thought was able to develop sufficiently to contribute to the Neo-Confucian tradition. In addition, these debates led to the constructive creation of unique features in the line of the Cheng-Zhu School. Korean Neo-Confucianism, which previously had been in the school of Master Zhu's Southern Song Neo-Confucian synthesis, began claiming its unique identity among the East Asian countries.

T'oegye Yi Hwang on Self-Cultivation and Sagehood

It is understandable that, following the Neo-Confucian scholars and tradition, T'oegye located self-cultivation and sagehood as the fundamental project of Confucian learning. His elaborate engagement with this primary goal in Korean Neo-Confucianism was manifested in his major works, the *Sunghak Sipto* (*Ten Diagrams on Learning to Be a Sage*) and the *Four-Seven Letters*. The *Ten Diagrams*, which T'oegye composed for the instruction of young King *Sunjo* (1567-1608) in 1568, has been thought of as the summation of T'oegye's ideas about self-cultivation and sagehood. For him, sagehood became a practical goal rather than a theoretical ideal. This led T'oegye to assert that once one takes the Neo-Confucian way of self-cultivation as orthodoxy, a penetrating understanding of the meaning of the text and a proper practice of moral-spiritual cultivation should be embodied simultaneously. T'oegye's object in the *Ten Diagrams* is to present the framework and path of his own conviction. The *Ten Diagrams* integrates spiritual practice with the full metaphysical framework and mediates the transition between them with a description of the metaphysically based psychological theory that informed Neo-Confucian ascetical theory and practice. It is compressed in its presentation; it has been

called a “crystallization of the Neo-Confucian vision.”¹⁹⁶

In this section, I will demonstrate that T’oegye’s idea of the self-cultivation and sagehood is the crux of the manifestation of Korean Neo-Confucian spirituality in the sixteenth century during the Joseon dynasty. Several theoretical analyses will be unfolded on the basis of the presupposition that T’oegye’s system was culturally constructed and was based on the work of Zhu Xi. It would be redundant to explore the whole system of T’oegye, most of which has been already presented in the section on Zhu Xi in this study. This section instead considers the *Four-Seven Letters* and some specific sections of *The Ten Diagrams on Learning to Be a Sage* as relevant resources for construct the argument. First, as the metaphysical groundwork, T’oegye’s perception of the principle, li, and the material force, qi, will be surveyed. Second, I will discuss human nature and mind in T’oegye’s system. The exploration of *kyung* (reverence, mindfulness) as T’oegye’s spiritual methodology will be explored next. This sequential investigation will unveil the unique contributions of T’oegye’s concept of self-cultivation and sagehood, developed in the Korean context.

Li, the Metaphysical and Ontological Ground

As a Cheng-Zhu scholar, T’oegye’s theoretical endeavor related to self-cultivation began with the critical recognition of the dualistic tendency of the human mind: the mind of Way and the human mind. As mentioned above, Zhu Xi recognized that the origin of the problem inherent in the human mind stems from the incomparable co-existence of two natures: the mind of heaven and earth vs. the mind of material endowment. The former plays a critical role in shaping the principle of mind, the so-called true mind. The latter follows the material force that is composed of the habits, dispositions, temperament, and feelings of the individual. It hampers the true mind

¹⁹⁶ Kalton, *To Become a Sage*, 184-185.

from functioning properly in human nature. This recognition led T'oegye to stress the significance of an appropriate understanding of nature and mind, and his metaphysical and ontological survey was indispensable for its solid foundational understanding of the human mind. Now we will examine the li-qi as the metaphysical and ontological ground of the human mind and its implications for self-cultivation.

T'oegye basically accepted Zhu Xi's fundamental thesis on the dialectical relationship between principle and material force¹⁹⁷:

Between Heaven and Earth are principle and material force. Wherever principle exists at all there also material force exists. Likewise wherever any material force exists at all, there also principle exists... Material force does not exist outside of principle and principle does not exist outside material force. Of course they are inseparable from each other, but the distinction between them should not be blurred.¹⁹⁸

It is clarifying that even though li and qi are conceptually and ontologically distinguishable, they are inseparable and coalesce in the phenomenal world. However, T'oegye found confusion in the li-qi dynamics that was not resolved clearly by Zhu Xi's statement, 'principle prior, material force posterior.' Of course, T'oegye noted, principle and material force both move and issue forth. But this means that there was no priority for principle over material force on the moral and practical level. Rather, he stated, "Principle is the leader of material force and material force is the follower of principle."¹⁹⁹ That is, the heavenly principle itself flows naturally without being commanded by anything. This principle is most valuable and has nothing

¹⁹⁷ Tomeoda Ryutaro, "Yi T'oegye and Chu Hsi: Differences in Their Theories of Principle and Material Force," in *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*, ed. William Theodore De Bary and Jahyun Kim Haboush (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 253-254.

¹⁹⁸ T'oegye Yi Hwang, *T'oegye Chonso (Complete Works of T'oegye)* (Seoul: Taedong Cultural Institute, Songgyungwan University Press, 1978), 323-324.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 141.

to compare with it since it orders humans and things rather than being ordered by them. T'oegye thought that principle controlled material force and that the latter obeyed the former like the relationship between master and follower. There is no priority of principle on the ontological level, but the higher value transmits into the lower. This is one of T'oegye's developments that went beyond Zhu Xi's work. According to T'oegye, principle has no existential priority over material force, but it does have priority in terms of moral/ethical values.

The next development comes with T'oegye's observation that for Zhu Xi, li remains static in nature despite its full participation in the formation of things. Zhu Xi's rationale for li remaining static in its relationship with qi was, according to T'oegye, that the principle does not have priority over the material force on the cosmogonic level.²⁰⁰ T'oegye maintains that the static or limited role of li could not play a role in initiating the process of cosmic transformation due to the absence of dynamic creativity in itself. That is, Zhu Xi's conception of li as a static principle underlying the cosmic transformation cannot cope with the dynamic source of creativity in the process of cosmic transformation. For T'oegye, Zhu Xi's conception of principle is seemingly neither creativity nor activity, but the ground of being underlying the creative process.²⁰¹ T'oegye was firmly convinced that the notion of li should be conceived not only as the normative principle/nature of being behind the transformation of beings, but also as creativity itself, which can spontaneously 'self-move and self-rest.'²⁰² This understanding is strongly associated with his reinterpretation of Zhu Xi's conception of the *taiji* (Great Universe). As Zhu

²⁰⁰ Seung-Hwan Lee, "T'oegye's Moral Metaphysics and Moral Psychology," in *Confucian Philosophy in Korea*, ed. Haechang Choung and Hyong-jo Han (Seongnam-si, Korea: The Academy of Korean Studies, 1996), 33-36.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² T'oegye Chonso, vol. 1, p. 354. The English translation comes from Lee, 37.

Xi noted, in his commentary on Zhou Don-Yi's *Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate Explained*, "The *taiji* is in possession of the principle of both motion and rest." However, what he really meant was, "The *taiji* moves and rests by itself."²⁰³

This indicates that while Zhu Xi regarded the *taiji* as providing the ground underlying the movement and rest of yin and yang, T'oegye himself directed assigned the movability and rest-ability to the *taiji*. In this way, T'oegye added dynamic creativity to li, implying that it can move and rest by itself, besides the li of the normative principle/nature of being. While the li in Zhu Xi was somewhat passive, the li became active in T'oegye.

T'oegye's reinterpretation of li as active is confirmed by its coherence with the Confucian understanding of human nature (*sung, xing*) as principle. If the principle is conceived as a static being, then not only does the Neo-Confucian metaphysics need another set of arguments to explain the source of creative transformation in the cosmos, but the Neo-Confucian doctrine of "human nature as principle" must be activated by another agent in the process of moral self-cultivation. However, in the light of the Mencius tradition, the four beginnings as the seeds of virtues are not latent or dormant states of morality, but dynamic powers generated from inside of human nature. Mencius maintained that human's nature is a dynamic source of potentiality. It is therefore reasonably induced from T'oegye's logic that if li is allowed to fully manifest itself, human nature can also be active by itself. The concept of li as "an autonomous center of creativity dynamically and continuously issuing moral powers for anthropocosmic transformation"²⁰⁴ makes it possible that the li in human nature can be realized and preserved through one's self-cultivation. Comparing this with Zhu Xi's perception of li, Tu Wei-Ming conclusively states that the active participation of li inherent in the human mind fully makes up

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ryutaro, 354.

for the process of self-cultivation and self-transformation with the cognitive function of the mind.²⁰⁵ Now the question about the role of li-qi in the human nature and mind will move this argument forward, and examination of li-qi in the context of the Four-Seven Debates will offer relevant answers.

The Four-Seven debates

The Four-Seven debates became a gate through which every Korean with a claim to significant Neo-Confucian learning had to pass. The issues involved are fundamental questions regarding the interpretation of the relationship of principle and material force as applied not only to feelings, but also as regards the closely related topics of the original nature and the physical nature, and the human mind and the mind of the Way (Dao).

The debates were initiated by the dualistic, nuanced interpretation of T'oegye on the "Diagram of the heaven's imperative," composed by Chung Chi-un (1509-1575). The important aspect of the diagram is the following statement: "The Four Beginnings are manifest from i/li; the Seven Emotions are manifest from ki/qi. Chung was thus the first Korean Neo-Confucian to mention the distinction between the Four and the Seven. T'oegye revised Chung's statement into a slightly different version: The Four Beginnings (仁, 義, 禮, 智) are manifestations of i/li (四端理之發) and the Seven Emotions (喜, 怒, 哀, 懼, 愛, 惡, 欲) are manifestations of ki/qi (七情氣之發). Even though this is similar to Zhu Xi's statement, it raises some doubt about the feasibility of separating the Four and the Seven into a dichotomous system of li and qi. It seems evident that T'oegye restated Zhu Xi's original idea, but the ambiguity generated by Zhu Xi's idea was uncovered again in the Korean context. The Four-Seven debates played a critical role in clarifying the equivocal relations between the li-qi.

²⁰⁵ Lee, 41.

Kobong's fundamental thesis against T'oegye was that the Four Beginnings did not exist outside the Seven Emotions; they were mentioned by Mencius to explain his belief that human nature is originally good and all human beings are good because they naturally possess the Four Beginnings of virtue, or the "fourfold" mind-and-heart. In other words, because the Four do not have their own ontological ground outside the Seven, it follows from the standpoint of Neo-Confucian epistemology that the former cannot be spoken of separately from the latter and, therefore, must be discussed in the context of an understanding of the latter. Kobong's questions to T'oegye seem to rephrase two brief statements of Zhu Xi that "the Seven Emotions cannot be separated from the Four Beginnings" and "the Four Beginnings can be understood from the standpoint of the Seven Emotions."²⁰⁶ Fundamentally, Kobong argues that T'oegye's explanation in the Four-Seven debates is not convincing since it analyzes the Four and the Seven in terms of the li-qi dualism and the good-evil opposition and affirms li and qi as being independent from each other in both the metaphysical and ethical contexts.

In response to Kobong's criticism of the dualistic tendency of li-qi, T'oegye made an elaborate presentation of his Four-Seven thesis: "Generally speaking, li and qi need, and depend on, each other: one being 'substance (體, chea/t'i)' and the other 'function (用, yong/yung).'

Certainly, there is no li without qi, and no qi without li."²⁰⁷ As Tu points out, however, the dilemma for T'oegye was the way in which he would "formulate a correct interpretation of the Mencius idea of human nature in the light of Zhu Xi's concept of mind."²⁰⁸ He thus unfolded his

²⁰⁶ Zhu Xi, *Classified Conversations of Master Zhu Xi*, 87:16a-b.

²⁰⁷ T'oegye Chonso, 16:14a (vol.1, p. 408). The English translation is from Chung, *The Korean Neo-Confucianism of Yi T'oegye and Yi Yulgok: A Reappraisal of the "Four-Seven Thesis" and Its Practical Implications for Self-Cultivation*, 63.

²⁰⁸ Wei-Ming Tu, "Yi T'oegye's Perception of Human Nature: A Preliminary Inquiry into the Four-Seven Debate in Korean Neo-Confucianism," in *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*, ed. William

argument from the standpoint of Mencius on human nature that the “pure” and “original” goodness of li referred to the li before it was disturbed or conditioned by external stimuli; human nature is unmixed with the physical endowment by qi. As part of his profound inquiry into the Cheng-Zhu doctrine of li-qi, T’oegye made an effort to convince Kobong through a series of letters that the Four are “purely good” and, therefore, should be expressed “principally by li,” whereas the Seven are capable of becoming good or evil and therefore should be expressed “principally by qi.”²⁰⁹

The series of interactive discussions ended up devising the critical concept of *hobal* (互發, mutual emanation), which resolved the dualistic tendency of li-qi: “In the case of the Four Beginnings, li is manifest and ki follows it (理發而氣隨之); in the case of the Seven Emotions, qi is manifest and li rides on it (氣發而理乘之).” This revised theory somewhat softened the stark dualistic disposition of li/qi by articulating the mutual dependence between them; metaphorically speaking, “a rider (li) and a horse (qi) are going together at the same time.” This statement indicates that T’oegye adhered to the dualistic position that the Four are manifest from li and the Seven from qi; more specifically, he explicitly emphasized the primary role of li in the issuance of the Four and the primary role of qi in the issuance of the Seven. This consolidated his central idea that based on the coalescence of principle and material force, when principle issues forth, material force follows; when material force issues forth, the principle rides on it; when principle moves, material force appears; when material force moves, principle appears. This dynamic elucidates the primary and viable ideas of T’oegye that there must be a certain contrast

Theodore De Bary and JaHyun Kim Haboush (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 268.

²⁰⁹ Chung, 63.

between the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions.²¹⁰

The Four-Seven contrasts have important implications for the way of self-cultivation in the light of Mencius and Cheng-Zhu teachings. For T'oegye, keeping the dualistic contrast between li-qi could enable one exclusively to follow the orthodox way of self-cultivation in the Cheng-Zhu School, not sidetracked by the Lu-Wang school that equated principle directly with the mind rather than with the nature. The core to self-cultivation for T'oegye is to realize that the true reality of human nature is the original goodness of it that remains intact in the Four Beginnings. He seems to mean that the fundamental aim of self-cultivation depends on one's realization of one's inner, moral nature in itself. It must involve what Mencius calls preserving and nourishing, which requires one to realize and extend the Four Beginnings. Indeed, it is the fundamental framework of Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism.

Mind, Nature and Feelings

The rudimentary difference between Four and Seven formed the stepping-stone of T'oegye's thought for addressing the relationship between the mind, human nature, and feelings. He implies that the Seven, unlike the Four, are basic physical desires and emotions without a moral status. In other words, the emotion of anger (one of the Seven), for instance, is not a moral virtue or feeling; therefore it must come from qi, which can transform it into the 'precarious' and 'selfish' dimension of the mind. Thus, from the standpoint of self-cultivation, T'oegye argues, "the feeling of anger (or any Seven) is especially excessive and difficult to control. When one would be occupied by anger (Seven), one should immediately forget one's anger and examine

²¹⁰ It is noteworthy that Chung maintains that T'oegye overly emphasized a clear-cut distinction between li and qi to interpret the underlying content of Zhu Xi's metaphysics, to a considerable extent.

the right and wrong of the matter at hand, according to principle, li.²¹¹ This leads to the question, How did T'oegye establish this kind of distinction between the human mind and the moral mind in his system and the problem of evil?

Initially, on the basis of Zhu Xi's dualistic framework, T'oegye maintains that the human mind represents the selfish desires and feelings identified with physical form, whereas the moral mind (the mind of Way) pertains to normative principles and feelings. The pivotal point where T'oegye's understanding diverted from Zhu Xi, however, is found in his view on the origin of evil. While Zhu saw the potentiality of the excessive or destructive dimension of emotions as the origin of evil, T'oegye viewed the human mind as the source of evil.²¹² According to his reconfiguration, the human mind is the source of human desire; therefore our selfish desires come from it. The mind (*shim, xin*) aroused from physical form is called the human mind. The activity of human desires really starts from this, and therefore the human mind is called the source of selfish human desires. The human mind of the ordinary people who act against Heaven indulges material desires, which are wicked. Hence, "the precariousness and instability of the human mind gives rise to evil."²¹³ The mind is the main locus for an aspirant for becoming a sage to reflect, examine, cultivate, and nourish in T'oegye's system. The question engendered here would be in what ways does one cultivate the human mind so as to preserve the moral mind and nurture the human mind?

In order to discuss this further, it is necessary to revisit T'oegye's unique concepts of 'substance' and 'function.' He referred to the unmanifested state as substance and the manifest as

²¹¹ TC 16:37b (vol. 1, 407). The English translation is originally from Chung, 127.

²¹² See details of Zhu Xi's views on emotion on page 26 of this chapter.

²¹³ Chung, 128.

function and to human nature as substance and feelings as function.²¹⁴ That is, human nature is the mind before it is aroused (substance), whereas the feelings are the mind after it is aroused (function). Edward Chung interprets this as meaning that the human nature is the ontological reality of mind, the mind-in-itself, whereas the feelings are the concrete, experiential manifestation of the mind.²¹⁵ For this reason, T'oegye stated that what is stimulated by external things is the mind, while the mind is moved by feelings. That is, the mind, when it is still and quiescent, may be thought of as simply possessing its nature or structure; when it becomes active in response to something, feelings move in accord with its inner structure. Because the feelings are the inevitable expression of the mind, it follows that self-cultivation must require one to attain the so-called centrality of the mind in its absolutely pure state (equilibrium) before the issuance of feelings.²¹⁶ Accordingly, T'oegye stated in chapter 8 of his *Sunghak sipto* that the primary role of the mind is to unite, commend, and apprehend human nature and feelings.²¹⁷ Here we find a clue to the way of self-cultivation in the context of the mind and feelings. Since the emotive feelings and desires are not necessarily morally grounded or oriented, for T'oegye, a discipline of emotional control and moral cultivation is required.

T'oegye's in-depth description of these dynamics was comprehensively systematized in chapter 6 of his *Ten Diagrams*, entitled, "The Mind combines and governs the Nature and the Feelings." He asserted that one pursuing the way of the sage should have a clear distinction of

²¹⁴ Concerning the development of this idea, T'oegye cites Zhang Zai's and Zhu Xi's doctrine that "the mind commands human nature and feelings." This doctrine was originally Zhang Zai's saying and was extended by Zhu Xi. See T'oegye Cheoso 25:19b, vol. 2, p. 10.

²¹⁵ Chung, 129.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 130.

²¹⁷ Hwang Yi and Michael C. Kalton, *To Become a Sage: The Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning*, Neo-Confucian Studies (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 162-164.

“Heaven’s principle” and “selfish desires”; the former is what enables aroused feelings to become morally and emotionally harmonized, whereas the latter may lead them to evil.²¹⁸

T’oegye argues that it is extremely important to be “very clear on the distinction of principle and desires” so that one can “illuminate Heaven’s principle” and put it into practice. The embodiment of the distinction depends on whether or not one’s mind governs one’s feelings.

A comprehensive investigation of cosmic ontology, principle/material force, human nature, mind, and feelings reveals the significant differences in two aspects between T’oegye and Zhu Xi. First, T’oegye developed the concept of li as an active participant in the moral and cosmic dynamic, which affirmed the self-manifesting capability of the principle, li. Thus, li was considered a practical moral substance, and that concept proceeded into the idea that li in the human being can be cultivated through the practice of self-cultivation. Second, T’oegye stressed a more rigorous view of self-desires as ‘wicked’ and even ‘evil.’ Because he viewed the human mind as the origin of evil, his idea of self-cultivation was given a greater moral or ethical tendency than that of Zhu Xi. Then, was T’oegye’s method of self-cultivation therefore different from that of Zhu Xi? If so, what aspects could be improved or changed in T’oegye’s method?

The Centrality of Kyung in Korean Neo-Confucianism

The beginning point of T’oegye’s idea of reverence as the method for self-cultivation and sagehood came from Zhu Xi and the Chinese Neo-Confucians. They interpreted reverence as an attitude of reverent piety toward Heaven and Earth, as well as an intellectual and moral seriousness in handling things and human relationships. And T’oegye accepted reverence as the

²¹⁸ Ibid., 128-132.

central goal and method of moral and spiritual cultivation.²¹⁹ He articulates this in terms of the mind before and after the arousal of feelings: How can one aspire to establish the moral mind?

Before the mind is manifest, the learning of the superior man is to take reverence as the first principle and to give full effort to preserving and nourishing. After the mind is manifest, it is to give full effort to self-examination and self-cultivation. That is, the reason why the learning of reverential seriousness completes the beginning and end of the learning of reverence.²²⁰

Chapter six of the *Ten Diagrams* also resonates with the same voice.²²¹ T'oegye declared the self-cultivation of kyung (敬, *jing*) as the beginning and end of learning to be a sage. This commitment resulted from his creative synthesis of Zhu Xi's thought.²²² In the context of the Four-Seven, it indicates that one has to be conscientious about one's pattern of behavior as well as the inner tendencies of feelings and desires.

T'oegye's concept of reverence, or kyung, was additionally nuanced or colored with a practical, religious, and contemplative understanding. Reverence connotes mindfulness, conveying the Neo-Confucian skill of maintaining serious determination and constant concentration in mind cultivation.²²³ That is, T'oegye was convinced that kyung should consist

²¹⁹ In the *Diagram of the Mandate of Heaven Explained* (*Chunmyung tosol*), T'oegye refers to the "learning of the superior person" as the "learning of reverential seriousness," maintaining the Mencius doctrine that the task of "preserving the moral mind and nourishing human nature" is the essence of the study of reverence." T'oegye Chonso, vol. 3, p. 144. The quote is from Chung, 133.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ T'oegye Chonso, vol. 1, p. 211.

²²² Edward Y. J. Chung, "Yi T'oegye on the Learning of Reverential Seriousness (Kyonghak): A Korean Neo-Confucian Spirituality?" *Korea Journal* 32, no. 1 (1992): 70.

²²³ Chung, *The Korean Neo-Confucianism of Yi T'oegye and Yi Yulgok: A Reappraisal of the "Four-Seven Thesis" and Its Practical Implications for Self-Cultivation*, 134. Kalton also affirms that an alternative translation for kyung is called for, since on the surface "reverence" does not suggest the concern for a recollected and focused consciousness that became a critical factor in the framework of Neo-Confucian theory. Kalton, *To Become a Sage*, 198.

of the inner process of concentration upon one thing without departing from it. The process of cultivating reverence/mindfulness involves the external method of concentrating on one thing and the internal method of being cautious and self-watchful. This ongoing task leads aspirants to sagehood to attain the state of refined single-mindedness, which is the ultimate state of self-cultivation and sagehood; a tranquil mind prior to active arousal.

It is noteworthy that Kalton characterizes the concept of *kyung* described by T'oegye as having embedded religious meaning reflecting a sense of religious awe and reverence for the Tao of Heaven.²²⁴ He is careful to assert that the concept is parallel to religious feelings, similar to the mundane encountering the theistic form in the Western tradition. Here, *Kyung* refers to the nonpersonal and immanent pattern or structure that becomes the object of reverence. The religious nuance of *kyung* was discovered in T'oegye's interest in the *Book of Odes*, in which he exhorted, "Reverence it [the Tao of Heaven], reverence it! Heaven is lustrous; its Mandate is not easy! Do not say it is lofty and high above; ascending and descending, it watches daily over your affairs."²²⁵ This makes clear that the Tao of Heaven used to be referred to as an object of reverence.

It should not be neglected that even though T'oegye referred to *kyung* as the best method for self-cultivation, he also suggested the investigation of principle as a cognitive process of self-cultivation. The imperfection of the human mind results from its inability to apprehend the whole world externally due to the loss of the way of Dao in the mind. The aim of the investigation of principle is not only to discover the way of Dao in the external world and to attain the objective truth. Any new grasp of information and knowledge should also be appropriated practically and

²²⁴ Kalton, *To Become a Sage*, 198-199.

²²⁵ T'oegye, *Onhaengnok [the Record of Words and Behaviors]*, 3.23a-23b; TC, B, p. 830. This is quoted in Yi and Kalton, 199.

embodied within one's own existence; the subjective implication of the objective investigation is emphasized in the learning process. To stress this, he used the unusual term 'ripening' in several of his texts. This term indicates "the gradual absorption and personal assimilation and complete mastery of principle until it becomes second nature—or in Confucian terms, a recovery of our original nature."²²⁶ This is the prime reason that T'oegye allotted two sections in the *Ten Diagrams* to the topics of Elementary Learning and the Great Learning, chapters 3 and 4 respectively, right after presenting the anthropocosmic worldview in chapters 1 (the Supreme Ultimate) and 2 (the Western Inscription). For T'oegye, self-cultivation and the way to sagehood essentially demand the attainment of moral truth via the investigation of principle, which sheds critical light upon the changing and transforming of human nature into the way of Tao.

Quiet-sitting meditation is considered a key practice for collecting the body and the mind according to the moral principle as well as for mastering the learning of the moral principle. If the self is distorted, dispersed, and not collected, one's body and mind will be in darkness and disorder, while the moral principle cannot be united together. Such a method is a way of experiencing the tranquil interiority of one's mind by keeping it in a quiet and peaceful atmosphere. This method serves to overcome distracting thoughts, feelings, and desires. This is the reason T'oegye's concept of *kyung* is more of a contemplative approach, focusing on the exercise of suppressing selfish human desires and preserving Heaven's principle.²²⁷ Within the quiet-sitting meditation, T'oegye probably expected one to experience single-mindedness through the inner process of concentrating upon one thing; this method would unite one with the tranquility in one's interior mind which is freed from any external distraction, overcoming selfish desires and illuminating the principle of the mind.

²²⁶ Ibid., 192.

²²⁷ *T'oegye Chonso* 37:38b, vol. 1, 259.

T'oegye's concept of self-cultivation is distinctive among Neo-Confucians because his ideas stemmed from his elaborate endeavor to establish kyung as a pattern of life or lifestyle. He concludes his *Ten Diagrams* with a chapter that describes life with kyung in the form of an ideal day. The admonition reflects two messages; being quiet is the primary thing, along with continual mindfulness. Looking for the moral mind as the appropriate response of the Neo-Confucians essentially requires mental recollection, and it can only be generated by quiet sitting. Mental recollection is sought as a means of ensuring proper responsiveness to every situation, and it creates the situation of one's mind actively responding to the individual moment and relationship, including oneself, one's family, one's state, and the whole world. Then, kyung as a lifestyle is supposed to prevail in all aspects of one's life, enabling one to be a fully realized human being who is embodied according to the Confucian (or Mencius) description.

Let us summarize T'oegye's conception of kyung, the Korean Confucian way to self-cultivation and sagehood. T'oegye initially followed Mencius' positive perception of the human nature and mind as inherently endowed by the Heavenly principle. The principle in human nature, however, is dispersed by muddiness and impurity of the material force that results in moral absence, implying a lack of harmony with the order within the heaven and earth. It is presented phenomenally that the moral mind is distorted by emotional instability. The primary goal of kyung as a way of self-cultivation is to correct, control, or purify the material force/Seven Emotions and to illuminate the moral mind, the heavenly endowed nature. The investigation of principal, contemplative quiet-sitting, and habitual self-examination were named by T'oegye as the practical methods of kyung.

T'oegye as Contributor to Korean Confucian Spirituality

Identifying T'oegye's work as a major Korean revitalization of Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism, Edward Chung points out that T'oegye's primary contribution was the theoretical development and enhancement of the inner enterprise of sagehood and spirituality. Neo-Confucianism as synthesized by Zhu Xi underwent a shift of focus to the internalization of the heavenly principle by practical implication and application in the sixteenth-century Korean context. This means that the shift of focus stemmed originally from T'oegye's views on the principle as the active entity distinct from any passive or latent aspects. Clarifying the ambivalent relationship between li and qi, T'oegye argued that the principle, li, is equipped with active creativity and mobility, and then human potentiality in the sense of Mencius gained its relevancy because human nature is inherently able to change and transform itself by practicing self-cultivation. This results in focusing relatively heavily on cultivating the interior faculties within a person.

The outcomes of the active and creative principle entails solidifying the dualistic dynamic between li and qi as well as implicitly emphasizing the priority of li over qi, despite T'oegye's argument about their mutual dependence in the context of the Four-Seven debates. The li conceptualized by the active creativity and priority of qi evolved into the transcendence of li in the religious/spiritual realm of T'oegye.²²⁸ That is, li is regarded as the transcendent reality of all existence. For this reason, T'oegye sees sagehood as the ultimate truth/goodness of human existence, which is thought to be in full unity with Heaven's principle. In the Neo-Confucian world of T'oegye, therefore, the transcendence of li is embodied in the moral-spiritual mind (the mind of the Way, *doaxin*) of human enterprise. That is, the ultimate interest or concern of T'oegye moves into the way in which one cultivates the moral mind, the inner enterprise of

²²⁸ Chung, "A Confucian Spirituality in Yi T'oegye: A Korean Neo-Confucian Interpretation and Its Implications for Comparative Religion," 210.

sagehood and spirituality. Cultivation of the mind, instead of self-cultivation, would be a more appropriate name for the primary goal of T'oegye's new form of Confucianism in Korea. This can be called, therefore, 'spirituality of the mind' or 'interiority focusing on internalizing the Heavenly Tao within human nature.'

T'oegye's focus on cultivating the mind via practicing kyung uncovers the other distinctive feature of his Confucian spirituality: ascetic contemplation. Contrary to Zhu Xi's conviction that evil or evildoing is generated from excessive emotional arousal, T'oegye viewed the human mind as the origin of evil due to its disposition to pursue material or selfish desires. The attainment of the moral mind is achieved, for T'oegye, by subduing, controlling, and correcting the human mind in which the deep contemplative and attentive life of self-awakening characterizes the ascetic elements. T'oegye's conceptionalization of kyung/jing is another locus to unveil the religious or spiritual aspect of reverence/mindfulness. For Zhu Xi, an aspirant should apply reverence to their own moral cultivation; he saw kyung/jing as an attitude of reverence toward Heaven and Earth, as well as an intellectual seriousness and moral uprightness. But, T'oegye thought of kyung as the first principle of Confucian learning as well as religious reverence for Heaven's Principle. He believed that holding fast to kyung with self-examination and self-rectification leads to the refined state of single-mindedness, and it gives rise to an increase in the significance of abstinence from bodily desires and emotional fluctuation. This will ultimately lead one to cultivate one's interior faculties enough to achieve a moral nature, fulfilling the heavenly endowed nature within one's life; self-cultivation leads to becoming a sage.

We have researched the Neo-Confucian concepts of self-cultivation and sagehood that T'oegye constructed in the sixteenth-century Korean context. As far as T'oegye is concerned, the

process accommodates an intellectual insight, a contemplative self-understanding, a moral-spiritual self-cultivation, and a reverential piety. These are all indispensable elements for the full manifestation of the heavenly endowed principle within the human moral nature, which is the primary aim of Confucian teaching and learning.

Implication in East Asian Choice

The comprehensive exploration of Neo-Confucianism and its cosmological and philosophical concepts presents with appropriate interpretative frames to understand the fundamentals of the way in which East Asian cognition and choice making has been distinctively affected within historical and cultural context. First of all, Neo Confucian notion of ontological interconnectedness among heaven, earth and human beings has prompted the core idea of the interrelatedness among the being and myriad. It critically affirms the East Asians to think that human beings are inherently interrelated based upon anthrocosmic being so that the individual self could not be live or meaningless to live alone. The mutual interconnectivity is the sole foundation of the human beings. It has constructed the self-concept of the interdependence and collectivism in East Asian context.

Second, the crux of the Book of Change has predominately permeated into the cosmological or philosophical worldview that any existence and its nature have been formed not with static, but with consistent flow or dynamic change between the interactions of yin/yang. It constructs the crucial notion in East Asian philosophy that reality is composed not of materialistic substance, but of ongoing process among the myriads. It has become the philosophical or ideological background of the cultural phenomenon of change or movement; none of being is permanent or everlasting, but temporary or tentative. In the ontological sphere, it

suggests that no being in the cosmos is static with an accomplished form. Being is viewed as process and change; all being is not-yet-finally-formed. The cognitive dimension in the dialectic world does not make an effort to discover a finite fact nor to consider it as truth; instead, Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian spirituality pursues a balance among the dualistic or different aspects of the world toward interior harmony. The East Asian choice making is therefore considered as manifesting tools to identify the best options in given situation, which can be easily changed, shifted or overturned.

Third is further proceeded from the second that tolerance of contradiction is inevitable or inherent in ongoing process since ongoing change is supposed to be tolerated to contradictory object or facts. Rather than one truth would attempt to subdue or overcome over the other, East Asian tends to consider that truth is revealed in a middle way between the contradictions or opposite. It has equipped East Asian with holistic approach or way of thinking. The choice therefore can be regarded as practical instrumental for East Asian to discover a middle point without contradiction among given options embracing diverse potential consequences of the choices. This is the rational that East Asian choice is grounded in holistic way of thinking.

Conclusion

This chapter on Neo-Confucian self-cultivation and sagehood has explored the philosophical and theoretical systems of Zhu Xi in Sung China and T'oegye Yi Hwang in Joseon Korea. Zhu Xi's metaphysical and ontological understanding of li, qi, and nature explicitly established his unique concept of 'anthropocosmic' human nature in Chinese Neo-Confucianism in the Sung dynasty. His core ideas about human nature, the mind, and feelings were examined for an explanation of the human condition and their relationship to the necessity of

transformation by cultivating the mind and controlling the feelings. As for the methods of self-cultivation and sagehood, we surveyed Zhu Xi's development of the concepts and practices of reverence, investigation of things, and quiet-sitting for the sake of harmony and equilibrium among Heaven, Earth, and human beings.

The comprehensive inquiry into T'oegye's understanding of this topic has concentrated primarily on his reformulation of li as an active and creative entity, which became the watershed that differentiates the Korean from the original, Chinese form of Neo-Confucianism. T'oegye's creative conception placed much significance on the human mind, since he regarded it as the locus for initiating the transformation of one's mind and nature. The attainability of self-cultivation, self-transformation, and sagehood, in T'oegye's context, relies heavily on the concept of kyung; Confucian aspirants committed to examining and reflecting on their mind, body, and behavior as well as to cultivating themselves in order to restore the heavenly endowed nature in the individual moment of life.

This investigation of the core beliefs related to Neo-Confucian self-cultivation and sagehood has elucidated the distinctive features of Neo-Confucian spirituality. First, it is a dialectical spirituality, affected by the cosmic ontology of the yin and yang dynamic. This implies that the human being is not static but dynamic, or "not-yet-finally-formed." The second feature is that it is a holistic spirituality, rooted in the critical idea that human nature is endowed by the Heavenly principle. The entirety of human life can be the locus to incarnate the moral principle harmonizing with the Heaven and Earth. The interdependence and interconnectedness of all beings is the third trait of Neo-Confucian spirituality, allowing Neo-Confucians to consider the intimate relations and mutual dependence among all of existence, including nature. Even if ambiguously identified in the relationship with the School of Mind (the Lu-Wang School), the

profound reflection and through examination of the mind could be considered enough to name the fourth aspect as the spirituality of mind or interiority. The final characteristic of Neo-Confucian spiritual formation follows immediately upon the former due to its inherent emphasis on subduing or controlling the material or selfish desires and mind: this characteristic is ascetic contemplative spirituality. Reverence/mindfulness (kyung) as the prerequisite for self-cultivation requires a refined single-mindedness through the control of bodily desires and emotional turmoil.

As the social analysis step of the Pastoral Circle, the exploration of Neo-Confucianism in this chapter has examined the historical origins and contextual background of East Asian cognition and spirituality. This discussion has expanded on the philosophical, analytic understanding of the main distinctive features of East Asian choice making addressed in the previous chapter. The next step of this project will be to engage with Ignatian spirituality in theological reflection. I will discuss the theological wisdom and insights within the Christian spiritual tradition regarding the spiritual choice as the primary aim of spiritual practices by drawing on the concept of discerned choice in the *Spiritual Exercises* composed by Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556).

Chapter 3. Election in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola

Introduction

The creation of the *Spiritual Exercises* is considered one of Ignatius of Loyola's greatest legacies. The historical significance of Ignatius' work is found not only in his providing an initial structure for the spiritual tradition of Western Christianity, but also in his gathering the various prayer methods and systematizing them comprehensively within the context of contemporary spiritual practice. Javier Melloni recounts well how the Spiritual Exercises became the guidelines for spiritual practice through their compilation of the various spiritual resources and traditions known at that time.²²⁹ The historical value and relevance of the Spiritual Exercises for all Christians has been rediscovered in the last century through a renewed study of their sources and a fresh impetus from the Vatican Council, and the Exercises have been popularized through the unprecedented increasing interest in personal spirituality. Even now, there continues to be an increase in the kinds of retreats and spiritual exercises based on the Ignatian foundation that can be experienced.²³⁰ This indicates that the Spiritual Exercises are not an isolated phenomenon of a religious order, the Jesuits, or the fruit of personal experience alone, but are drawn upon more and more for contemporary Christian spiritual formation, beyond religious, denominational, and cultural barriers.

Given the current awareness of the prevalent usage and application of the Spiritual Exercises in spiritual formation, this chapter begins then with the preliminary question, "For

²²⁹ Javier Melloni, *The Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition* (Leominster, United Kingdom: Gracewing, 2000).

²³⁰ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear : An Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality*, rev. ed., Traditions of Christian Spirituality Series (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000), 17-19.

those giving and making the Spiritual Exercise, what is the intended purpose? What is the desired goal? What is the chief aim of the Exercises as a result of this spiritual practice?"

The purpose of the Spiritual Exercises has been characterized in several different ways. Michael Ivens stresses the conversion of the heart resulting in a new quality or a new direction of life as the purpose of the Exercises, commenting faithfully the text of the Introductory Exploration [*Spiritual Exercises*, 1].²³¹ Melloni sees mystical union with God as the eventual goal of the Spiritual Exercises.²³² John English asserts that spiritual freedom is the utmost goal of the Spiritual Exercises in his memorable work.²³³ David Lonsdale seems to agree with English that spiritual freedom is the primary purpose. But he also remarks several times that deliberating and making choices in accord with the original intention or purpose of life as intended by God is the ultimate purpose.²³⁴ My research does not find that these different voices create a conflict and undermine the integrative value of the Spiritual Exercises. Rather, each voice uncovers holistic aspects of the human experience in making the Exercises, the fact that within that experience, these diverse aspects operate simultaneously in different areas such as consciousness, unconsciousness, feelings, choice, attitude, etc.

This chapter is grounded in the presupposition that the ultimate purpose of the Spiritual Exercises is to make people reshape the patterns of their spiritual choice-making based on a new discernment perceived as a result of doing the Spiritual Exercises. Despite the substantial amount

²³¹ Michael Ivens and Ignatius, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary; a Handbook for Retreat Directors* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 1.

²³² Melloni, 51-54.

²³³ John J. English, *Spiritual Freedom: From an Experience of the Ignatian Exercises to the Art of Spiritual Guidance*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1995), 3.

²³⁴ Lonsdale; David Lonsdale, "Ignatian Spirituality," in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 355; Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, 18, 109 & 135.

of literature that presents election or choice as the primary goal of the Spiritual Exercises, rarely has the literature comprehensively articulated the significance of the election in the Exercises. This chapter will focus explicitly upon the centrality of the election in the Spiritual Exercises.

The Principle and Foundation section critically supports the assumption, explicating, “I ought to desire and elect [choose] only the thing which is more conducive to the end for which I am created” [Spiritual Exercises, hereafter SE, 23]. It is appropriate to rephrase this entire section as arguing that the end for human beings is to praise, revere, and serve God and the primary means for the ultimate end is to make choices that better lead to the deepening of God’s life in human nature. This chapter will therefore make an effort to demonstrate that one of the ultimate purposes of the Spiritual Exercises is to equip Christians to facilitate the discernment of Christian spiritual choices which can fully be embodied through desire, indifference, imaginative contemplation, and the rules of discernment.

As the third movement of the Pastoral Circle, this research will play a significant role in my theological reflection in the context of East Asian Christian spirituality. I intend to draw theological or spiritual insights or wisdom out of the Christian spiritual tradition to answer the following research questions: What kinds of theological frames could be used in responding to the given context in an appropriate way? In what constructive or complementary ways could the concept of spiritual choice in the Christian tradition help the East Asian Christian choice? What is the theological concept of spiritual choice that challenges or confronts the cultural form of the choice making? And what are the benefits identified for the given context?

The centrality of the election, not only in the context of the second week of the Spiritual Exercises but also throughout all the weeks, will be extensively investigated. First, the election will be explored in the context of each of the four different weeks of the Spiritual Exercises. The

next inquiry will develop through investigating desire and then examining indifference as the preliminary spiritual virtue for spiritual choice. The comprehensive examination of imaginative contemplation will follow, viewing this as the groundbreaking feature of the *Exercises* as well as the essential ingredient for renewing the patterns of spiritual choice making. The rules of discernment, the most distinctive feature and contribution of the *Exercises* and of Ignatian spirituality, will be explored next in order to analyze the elements necessary for Christian spiritual choice making. This all-embracing investigation will put forward the argument, first, that the election or spiritual choice is the chief aim of the Spiritual Exercises. This theoretical endeavor will also elucidate the major characteristics of the spiritual choice as well as propose the validation of the centrality of spiritual choice in Christian spiritual practices. Finally, I will propose the concept of discerned choice as practical embodiment of election in our contemporary Christian context as appropriate form of spiritual formation.

Ignatian Election in the *Spiritual Exercises*

Election is an absolutely unique concept as it appears in the tradition of Christian discipleship inherited specifically from Ignatius Loyola and his spiritual legacy, the *Spiritual Exercises*. I will first acknowledge his perspective on human beings and then explore the reason he composed the book, noting that election is the aim of the exercises. Ignatius firmly believed that each human being is created for a purpose, which is, “to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord and by so doing to save his or her soul” [SE 22]. Remarkably, Ignatius carefully defined the well-being of the human soul, and he held that human life is totally dependent upon the person’s realization that God is their origin.²³⁵ God and its ultimate purpose (praise Him). Therefore, this

²³⁵ Dyckman, Garvin and Liebert borrow the Jungian term “individuation” to represent the totality of one’s person becoming an *imago Dei* in light of whom God calls one to become. Whole articulation

fundamental understanding leads Ignatius to confirm that human self-realization and good order are rooted in consistency between that ultimate purpose and the choices which men and women make in particular circumstances.²³⁶

All choices that human beings make need to be consciously related to that ultimate purpose. Ignatius also seems to pay attention to the fact that all human decisions are vulnerable to external elements and contradictory factors contained in every human context. Even interior factors of human life, the so called “motions” in the Ignatian context, such as feeling, thinking, willing and desiring, are conceivably swayed by disordered or distorted patterns. This helps us understand the purpose behind Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises*: “the overcoming of self and the ordering of life on the basis of a decision made in freedom from any ill-ordered attachment” [SE, 21]. For Ignatius, any decision or choice must be in accord with the ultimate purpose of each human being.²³⁷ The *Spiritual Exercises* were hence explicitly composed to discover each human being’s lifelong vocation and to help each person make choices or decisions based on that vocation. The comprehensive methods employed in the *Spiritual Exercises* are consciously directed at those who attend a retreat and are guided by a director. After all, beyond the simple choice of a particularly decisive kind or a “state of life,” a person on retreat profoundly recognizes that an authentic election, which entails seeking, finding and following God’s will is intimately connected to discovering one’s lifelong vocation and making large and small choices through the process described in the *Exercises*.

indicates the possible resemblance between election and individuation and furthermore the fact that the active imagination is taken into account for accomplishing their purpose in both. See more details in Katherine Marie Dyckman, Mary Garvin, and Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed : Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 124.

²³⁶ David Lonsdale, "Ignatian Election," in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville, Kentucky: The Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 269.

²³⁷ Dyckman, Garvin, and Liebert, 282; Ivens and Ignatius, 128 and 130.

*The First Week*²³⁸

Not only is it important to acknowledge that election is the primary goal of the *Spiritual Exercises*, but it also is significant to notice that election occupies a certain part in the exercises of the Second Week. It is worthwhile briefly to articulate the ways in which an exercitant is directed by the *Spiritual Exercises* before encountering election.

Upon entering the First Week, a retreatant is initially oriented to the theological anthropology of Ignatius, which he explicitly elucidates in the Principle and Foundation [23]. This section elaborates on the dependence of human beings upon God—the human experiences of being a creature: “Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of this to save their souls.” This leads the retreatant to the recognition that the salvation of the world is gifted to the creatures and that the Trinity and divine providence initiate all. Ignatius does dissuade the exercitant from viewing God as a patriarchal or hierarchical figure ruling over the creation in favor of viewing God as the One desiring to communicate with and accompany humans.²³⁹

Given this theological vision, Ignatius underlines the mutual reciprocity in election in that God desires to communicate with human beings, and the will of God is manifested in the consistent endeavor to communicate with God. He believes that constant dialogue with God in

²³⁸ The term in the title, “week” appears in the Autograph and its implication has consensus among the commentators that it indicates a stage, a step or a phase of the spiritual procedures in the *Spiritual Exercises* context, rather than the chronological time frame (7 days). It should however be recognized that Ignatius intended a forty days retreat with this text at origin.

²³⁹ This paper also recognizes Ignatius's impulses did not override patriarchy and hierarchy of both the culture and church of his day, though he did make some significant moves against these, to be sure. But he was still subject to them according to historical evidences witnessing his significant respect for the word or directive of the person in authority, the type of obedience he set up, the hierarchical structure of his order, etc.

prayer renews the exercitants' image of and relationship with God that is the bedrock of the election. Ignatius' intention is practically embodied in the colloquy at the end of each exercise.²⁴⁰ For instance, the colloquy on mercy is followed by the "Meditation on Our Own Sins" [63] in which the retreatant is asked to speak with God, and this plays a crucial role in renewing the divine image and the retreatants' relationship with God.

As the next step for election, the First Week is intended to prepare and reorient the state of the retreatants' soul by examining their interior faculties such as feeling, thinking, willing, and doing. The prayer methods of the Examination of Conscience direct the retreatants' soul to initially perceive the dispositional sinful nature or faults frequently committed so as to convince him or her of the necessity of divine grace for renewing or reorienting the soul [24-44]. The meditation on the Three Sins by the Angels, Adam and Eve, and sinners destined to hell presents them with a broad contextual comprehension of personal sin [45-54]. The sequence urges the retreatant to seriously consider confessing personal sin, counting on divine grace.

In this Week, a time when most retreatants experience themselves as alienated or desolate by seeing the misery of the world around them, they also discover themselves as sinful. The experience of sinfulness is mainly encountered in this week of the retreat, and each retreatant may go through alienation from God, the self and the world. The meditation on sinfulness, meanwhile, deliberately brings about a new awareness of responsibility for alienation: the person making the retreat has sinned against the light.

²⁴⁰ Colloquy in the Spiritual Exercises indicates a certain type of a prayer in which Ignatius directs the seekers to contemplate imaginatively the conversation with God. While Ignatius presents colloquy as concluding an exercises with specific content or procedures, he presents it in various ways. In whatever form the colloquy is proposed, it plays a critical role in enhancing and nurturing the personal and spontaneous quality of conversation between the retreatant and God (Jesus, Mary, etc.). It is also noteworthy that it is not an appendage to prayer, but its culmination by which the retreatant can intensify the prayer and contemplation.

This following contemplation on personal sin intensifies sin's stark contrast with the salvific grace of God; the more the retreatants' awareness of the sins prevailing in the world and in his or her life, the greater is the sense of the necessity of the grace of God in their soul. Furthermore, growing the deeper sense of the gracious and loving God instigates intrinsic awareness of the contrast with oneself and it invites the seeker to take appropriate response to God. The more his or her inner awareness of being alienated and desolate grows, the more vital is the desire to be a disciple of and to follow Jesus. This striking contrast leads the exercitant to face the critical initial question, "What I am supposed to do for the gracious work of Jesus Christ?" which seems shed light upon the preliminary step of the choice making. This experience thus leaves a person at the threshold of the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises.²⁴¹

The Second Week

The retreatant who has had a deep "First Week experience" now in the Second Week enters the contemplation of the life of Christ with enthusiasm and gratitude. Contemplation of Jesus concentrates on Jesus' life journey and his kindness and sympathy. This experience turns out to be an invitation to help retreatants recognize what discipleship means and furthermore what their real choice might be. As Dyckman et al. put it, "it is not about whether to give up cigarettes or not, but about whether to let one's life be ruled by the Lord and His Plan."²⁴² On the way to election, Ignatius's deliberation designed in the *Spiritual Exercises* indicates that any exercitant should take at least two preliminary conditions. First, a person is presupposed to

²⁴¹ William A. Barry, "The Experience of the First and Second Weeks of the Spiritual Exercises," in *Notes on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, ed. David L. Fleming (St. Louis, MO: Review for Religious, 1983), 95-100.

²⁴² Dyckman, Garvin and Liebert, 101.

practice regularly the Examen prayer (the General Examination of Conscience) [43] to notice the way in which God is at work in his or her life and how to respond to it. The prayer helps the retreatant acknowledge the grace of the *Exercises* in all dimension of daily life [24-26]. If, in addition, an exercitant follows the exercises faithfully, they will equip him/her with the ability to discern good and bad spirits through reading the inner motions (will, intellect, affection, etc.).

It is legitimate to say, “Election weaves throughout the Second Week and forms its climax.”²⁴³ Specifically, through the exercises on the Call of the King, the Two Standards, the Three Classes of People, and the Three Kinds of Humility, Ignatius intends to nurture in retreatants the ability to recognize and choose God’s will when it is made known. Ivens confirms this in his commentary that the election is actually introduced on the first day with the Call of the King [91-98]. The meditation on the Call of the King consists of two parts: the call of the earthly King [91-94] and that of Christ our Lord [95-100]. The first meditation on the earthly King functions to prepare the retreatants for the second meditation, since their response to the earthly leader is also meant to be applied to their response to Christ’s call. The exercitants listen to the voice of our Lord in the second meditation inviting them to “labor with me, suffer with me and follow me” [95]. Its gradual process begins precisely with identifying the crucial questions in the Call of the King: “Who is this Jesus and what is it like to follow him?” [91-101]. In answering these questions, this meditation gives the retreatants the opportunity to discover their true self, united with the indwelling Spirit, so that they may respond to and identify with Jesus Christ. The meditation ends up creating a new self-image as a knight for the heavenly kingdom; they are no longer the shamed knights of the First Week.²⁴⁴ The new self-image spurs their desire to offer

²⁴³ Ibid., 280.

²⁴⁴ It is broadly agreed that the image of the knight for Ignatius is a symbolic term that represents his conversion of his identity. Before becoming a pilgrim, Ignatius identified himself as a “would-be

themselves to the Lord as a response to the love offered by Jesus Christ. At the end of the meditation, the retreatants are capable of offering their deliberate choice and earnest desire as the way of the greater service to praise and imitate the Lord [98]. This meditation enables the exercitants to facilitate the choice by offering their whole self to the Lord, and thus the election is implicitly in process.

Meditating on the Two Standards [136-148] on the fourth day of the Second Week challenges the retreatant to make a clear choice between Jesus and the Prince of Darkness.²⁴⁵ These meditations are ultimately intended to provide deeper knowledge of the two leaders—God and Satan—and their agenda or tactics. Whereas the Satan’s tactics pose its emphasis ultimately upon pride, self-sufficiency and honor, the Christ’s upon humility and spiritual poverty dissenting the glory of the world. The meditations do not just concern a choice between the standard of Christ and that of Satan: their aim is also to understand the deceits of the Evil One.²⁴⁶ By looking closely at some of the Enemy’s actions and recognizing how they could ruin their own lives, the retreatants solidify in contrast the inner motivation of why they should strive to know God’s tactics for bringing them to the fullness of being. Promoting the dispositions that enable one to live out Christ’s standard, the Two Standards help prepare them for the radical conversion of outlook and desire that constitutes the true life in Christ.²⁴⁷ It is evident that through this meditation that Ignatius hopes to enhance the retreatants’ ability to recognize and choose God’s will when it is made known.

romantic hero, courtier or a soldier.” The conversion experience employed the image to change his self-image to that of a heavenly knight guiding or protecting the reign of the Heavenly Kingdom. See, for example, Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear : An Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality*, 35-36.

²⁴⁵ Ivens and Ignatius, 103.

²⁴⁶ English, 147.

²⁴⁷ Ivens and Ignatius, 105.

The meditation on the Three Classes of Persons [149-157] sheds light upon the grace to choose what is more for the glory of the Trinity rather than being attached to money and possessions. The person making the Exercises should face these three different groups of people, and this gives them a chance to reflect upon which class they belong to. The people of the first class want to eliminate their attachment, but they postpone the action until the end of life (the postponers). Those of the second class rationalize their use of their fortune because they want to maintain control (the compromisers). The people of the third class do not prioritize money at all and are detached from it (the wholeheartedly indifferent). They actively manage their money to choose “what is more to the glory of his Divine Majesty and the salvation of my soul [152].” This choice and decision is rooted in love and one’s desire for true freedom, choosing with ‘indifference’ that which God most desires. This meditation trains the exercitant to attain a disposition of indifference and detachment which is in accord with the Principle and Foundation. Indifference is what the meditation on the Three Classes of People is all about since it intends to cultivate in the retreatant a freedom from things so they can attach themselves totally to God and to God’s service. The meditation deliberately focuses the seekers to ask themselves about their level of generosity: how much they could offer of their belongings, including their own life, for the glory of God. And the depth of their generosity and indifference also nurtures their desire increasingly to serve Jesus Christ. This desire alone is the cause of their accepting anything or of their relinquishing anything [155].

Next, when asked to meditate on the Three Kinds of Humility, the retreatant is concerned about their relationship with the person of Christ [165-168]. While each type of humility addresses the different modes, Ignatius’ intention is likely to invite the retreatant into the culminating humility and love of God. That is, the first humility is a passive definition, that of

‘fidelity to the law of God,’ by which they faithfully engage with the covenantal relationship with Christ. The second kind of humility contains both positive and passive aspects. Positively, it consists of the freedom of ‘indifference,’ in which a natural craving for wealth, honor, health, or a long life will not direct you to love our Lord. Meanwhile passively it is an attitude of loving and humility not for one’s own sake—“readiness to carry out the perceived desire of God in matters where no obligation obtains.”²⁴⁸ The third humility is the more desirable disposition in that the desire to imitate the way of Jesus by choosing with Christ poverty over wealth, and contempt with Christ over honor. One’s desire is to share the whole being and condition of the Beloved, which is the pinnacle of loving in the *Exercises*.

Their relationship to money, honor and even desire for life is repetitively confronted by the Three Classes of Persons and Three Kinds of Humility. Ignatius urges the retreatant to seek a new disposition of soul and a new relationship to Christ. Since the *Exercises* are a major step in the life-process of maturing in Christ, Ignatius clearly advocates the view that the paradoxical way of the third kind of humility embodies a radical choice to give one’s life entirely to Jesus, no matter what the consequences might be. Thus, humility is conceived as nothing other than the love of God. While all three preliminary steps, Meditation on Two Standards, on Three Classes of Persons, and on Three Kinds of Humility tune one’s disposition with God, the section of the election is introduced with continuing contemplations on Christ’s life.

It is noticeable that while Ignatius locates the Two Standards and Three Classes of Person on the fourth day, the Three Kinds of Humility is positioned on the twelfth day, right before the election session. This difference might reveal the emphasis of Ignatius upon humility as most valuable in one’s disposition or the inner state of the soul. As the *Spiritual Exercises* direct the exercitant to meditate or contemplate imaginatively the missional journey of Jesus, the director is

²⁴⁸ Ivens and Ignatius, 125.

aware that the retreatants' desires will be elicited and affective movement perceived. And the retreatant is finally invited to make a proper response to the inner motions. At this time, Ignatius implicitly asserts that humility is the indispensable condition of one's soul in order to make an appropriate reaction to the transcendent and salvific works of Jesus Christ, the election.

The Three Times for Election

The location of election in the *Spiritual Exercises* is not accidental. Ignatius' deliberate elaboration of the process of moving toward election creates the exercise context in which the retreatants become more intimately acquainted with the personal life of Jesus as they become more accustomed with the workings of their spirit. Under the strong conviction that the *Exercises* are designed to help persons find God's will in making personal life decisions, Ignatius initially reminds us of the human disposition that "anything whatsoever that I elect ought to be chosen as an aid toward that end, without my ordering or dragging the end into subjection to the means, but with my ordering the means to the end [169]." He immediately requires indifference as the prerequisite state of the soul in the directives [170].²⁴⁹

Then, he introduces three different "Times" (situations) when a correct and good choice related to one's life may be made in the context of faith. The First Time is when God so moves the soul that there can be no mistaking God's call. God's will is being revealed clearly, in a way that cannot be doubted. What marks this Time is the certainty it yields. Ivens herein makes comments of the four features of the First time: 1) what is shown is God's will as objective experiences; 2) one's will is moved by God himself to follow the way shown; 3) there is no

²⁴⁹ Ignatius considers matters about which a choice may be made [170-174]. These matters are called unchangeable choices, for example, priesthood and marriage.

doubt, or possibility of doubt, on either of the above points; 4) Ignatius exemplifies the life of St. Paul and St. Matthew as they followed Christ as the lucidity of the election [175].

The Second Time asks the exercitant to acknowledge what consolation and desolation are and to attain clarity through discerning the movements of spirits [176].²⁵⁰ Even if the clarity of God's will would not be as strong as the First Time, the comparison between consolation and desolation helps the retreatant understand how motions (thoughts, feelings, and imaginings) influence the affectivity of a person.²⁵¹ That is, Ignatius asks the retreatant for learning how the inner faculties can be facilitated to discern the will of God or its movement gradually unveiled within human nature. This is the place where the Rules of Discernment [313-327] become a comprehensively and elaborately instrument for election, which will be explored later in this paper.

The Third Time and Its Two Methods

The Third Time is one of "tranquility," which implies "an absence of any spiritual movements which could of themselves determine choice, and second, a freedom from all negative feelings that might obstruct rational deliberation."²⁵² In case an election is not made in the First or the Second Time, Ignatius suggests two methods of discovering what God wants from a person in the Third Time. In the first method, which he calls the method of Third Time, reason weighs the advantages and disadvantages of, for example, a particular marriage or getting

²⁵⁰ The detail explanation about the consolation and desolation will be helpfully found in the "the Rules of Discernment," later in this chapter.

²⁵¹ Ivens and Ignatius, 137.

²⁵² Ibid, 138.

a job [181]. The reasoning process is taken into consideration for the process of confirmation of election.

It is critical, however, to notice two things: indifference and the desire for grace [179]. Retreatants should first hold themselves in freedom “like a balance at equilibrium,” since without that freedom the reasoning process is thought of as simply tallying the advantages and disadvantages. Requesting the grace that is desired also plays an essential role in accomplishing the authentic rational process [180]. Harnessed readily by freedom and a desire for grace, the reasoning process approaches its confirmation of election. We have difficulty in recognizing the clear outlines of confirmation of election when we see the text itself due to its ambiguity and lack of articulation. Despite its vague expression, the significance of confirming election at the sixth point, indicating the diligent prayer and humble devotion as essential elements for greater glory to God, should not be underestimated in Ignatius’ method for election [183].²⁵³ After all, how do people know whether God accepts and confirms their decision? Not from what they have gone through in their reasoning process but from the humble realization that all decisions are tentative. This is the critical reason that they need to examine the beginning, middle and end of the process.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ Borrowing from Toner, Liebert and her colleagues elucidate five features of Ignatius’s confirmation. First, seeking confirmation is, in Ignatius’s mind, essential. Second, actually receiving it depends upon the weightiness of the matter for discernment...the faith perspective underlying election holds that God would give some disconfirmation. Third, confirmation might consist in spiritual consolations such as courage to proceed...fourth, seeking confirmation entails waiting, actively reviewing the process and outcome,...a final aspect comes after the completed election: appropriate authorities confirm the decision. Dyckman, Garvin, and Liebert. 288-289. This is originally from Jules J. Toner, *Discerning God's Will : Ignatius of Loyola's Teaching on Christian Decision Making*, No. 8 in Series □-- Original Studies, Composed in English (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1991), 201-232.

²⁵⁴ Elizabeth Liebert, “Spiritual Exercises in Context: the Ignatian Discernment” (Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union, class presentation, Nov. 14, 2008).

The second method for good election begins with Ignatius's confession that "the matter in question should descend from above, from the love of God" [184], and this plays a part in renewing "indifference." Afterward, Ignatius suggests the techniques of role-playing: imagining ourselves giving advice [185], imagining we are on our deathbed [186], or imaging ourselves on the judgment day [187]. Ignatius skillfully convinces the retreatant of how powerful imagination is to offer a way for making an election through these exercises. The election relies heavily on the way in which the exercitant imagines the situation. After all, the retreatant has a striking opportunity not only to observe the flow of the desire and affectivity, but also to take new or fresh perspectives on the subject matter. These complex procedures enable one to move onto a tentative decision and bring it to God for confirmation, which is same manner with the first method [188]. Distinctively enough, imagining scenes from the Bible gradually readies the retreatant to perceive their new identity as "the self in Christ." And then, the process invites the retreatant toward choosing an identity "in Christ," which entails that all choice is made "in Christ." Here is one of the crucial loci for developing my argument on the relationship between imagination and election, which will be developed in a later part of this paper. The formative role of the imagination in the election process is culminated at this stage.

The distinctive procedure of the three times and two methods is deliberately constructed and developed by Ignatius for election. Then, what are the dynamics among the times and methods in the election? How might Ignatius intend the several procedures to be facilitated? Despite the silence of the text on this issue, it is possible to note that each choice-making pattern or process could be combined as confirmation since Ignatius does not imply mutual exclusion. Once a choice or decision is made in one of the three times, another time could be utilized as confirmation. If the election includes confirmation in its process, the procedure would not be

fully accomplished until the end of the Third or the Fourth Week. As a whole, the election does not automatically happen at any given moment in the Second Week or in any other weeks of the retreat. The election can be prepared for and clarified by the retreat but not crystallized until after the conclusion of the retreat.

Third Week

The *Spiritual Exercises* presume that retreatants who have grown to know and love Jesus deeply in order to follow him more closely during the first two weeks will desire to share his passion. This desire ushers in what is called the Third Week. Ignatius puts the desire this way: “to ask for sorrow and confusion, because the Lord is going to his Passion for my sins” [193]. He explicitly states that to know, love, and follow Jesus gains new meaning in the light of the Third Week, including the call to compassion and to suffer with Jesus’ suffering. Being with Jesus implies entering into all dimension of his life, focusing not on personal experiences of the Passion but on willingly sharing or embracing all aspects of his life including the Cross and death.

The prayer direction of the Third Week is intended to help the retreatants escape the narrow self. Reaching a deeper level of the self, the retreatants are invited to move out of themselves toward Christ in much the same way that Jesus moved out of himself all through the Passion. Therefore, Ignatius has those making the *Exercises* seek the grace of “sorrow with Christ in sorrow, a broken spirit with Christ so broken; tears; and interior suffering because of the great suffering which Christ endured for me” [203]. This demands a deeply personal union with Jesus in suffering.

Contemplating the Passion of Jesus can initially be an excruciating experience for the exercitant now that the desired grace is grounded in a deeply felt sense of the sufferings of the Lord for them, not for Jesus or God. This is why the several experts share that some participants express disappointment, anger or frustration originating from their interior suffering due to observing the innocent suffering of Jesus.²⁵⁵ For instance, while contemplating the Agony in the Garden [290], retreatants discover Jesus not only as one feeling fear of the physical suffering that accompanies commitment to God. On the other hand, in his prayer, “Let this cup pass from me” (Mt. 26:39),” Jesus is presented to the exercitant as the one seeking love and support from the disciples and friends.²⁵⁶ This plays a critical role in differentiating the retreatants’ responses: some react with disappointment or frustration elicited by fear of the suffering or implicit rejection; some solidify a closer union with Jesus’ suffering regardless of its outcomes. This is a pivotal moment in which they must answer the question of whether to enter the Passion of Jesus.

This is the mysterious and compelling call to the depths of discipleship in the Third Week. The retreatants are now confronted with the fearful choice of whether to follow Jesus and participate in the depth of suffering with Jesus. For some, their new understanding of the Passion and of compassion can be identified as they connect their own suffering with that of the larger body of Christ. For others, the Third Week confirms the decision or choice made during the Second Week. And for still others, the call to share the totality of Jesus’s human limits and abandonment becomes a time of transformation in which they let go of their personal agenda and takes up God’s.

²⁵⁵ Dominic Maruca S.J. “the Graces of the Third and Fourth Week,” in *Notes on the Spiritual Exercise of Ignatius of Loyola*, ed. by David L. Fleming S.J. (St. Louis, MO: Review for Religious, 1983), 138-141; Liebert et al. note prayer this week may be unpredictable. Some experiences the dryness and distance of God so concretely that this state in itself becomes an experience of the passion. Dyckman, Garvin, and Liebert, 217.

²⁵⁶ English, 223-224.

The election is intensified or profoundly incarnated in the Third Week in the form of confirmation of the previous week. Encountering the Passion of Christ has the retreatants confirm the rightness of the revealed election even at the cost of their own suffering and death. The seekers are directed to choose their response to the encounter with mysterious grace, an encounter that can lead the exercitant to a new depth of compassion, friendship, and love in the light of suffering and death. This designates a confirmation of the election, the spiritual choice-seeking, and finding and following God's will that are intimately connected to discovering one's lifelong vocation and ultimately growing in an intimate relationship with God.

Fourth Week

Ignatius designates the Fourth Week as inaugurating a time to "be glad and to rejoice intensely because of the great glory and joy of (Risen) Christ our Lord" [221]. The exercitant experiencing the compassionate sharing with Jesus' Passion is now encouraged to join in the joy of the resurrected Christ whose love for human beings conquered the power of suffering and death. Thus God's consoling presence becomes the touchstone. It is worthwhile, however, to be conscious that the spotlight is not on the retreatants' joy and gladness but on Jesus. As with the grace of the Third Week, the retreatant should transcend their selfish yearning for joy and enter Jesus' joy.

The profoundness of the joy is readily discovered in the confounding response of the disciples to the empty tomb and to their encounter with the risen Jesus on the way to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-32); they are still afraid yet are filled with joy. While the fear and puzzlement of the disciplines originated in the disciples' agenda, in which the crucifixion is not the way to save the world, their burst of joy is due to the risen Jesus, which is unimaginable in their agenda. The

authentic joy gains as we are united with Jesus in his joy. Joining the joy of the risen Jesus leads the process of one's election into the stage of celebrating the manifestation of God's will in mortals as the way that the divinity of Jesus that was hidden in the Passion "now appears and manifests itself so miraculously in this holy Resurrection, through its true and most holy effects" [223].

The grace of the Third and Fourth Weeks focuses upon "Being with Jesus," while that of the First and Second Weeks focuses on "Following Jesus."²⁵⁷ The imaginative contemplation of the last two weeks initially prompts the exercitant to join the life of Jesus, his suffering, agony, and joy. It gradually grows in the interior awareness of the retreatants, however, that it is divine grace that initiates the seekers in sharing in all aspects of the life of Jesus the Lord, including his suffering, death, and resurrection. The retreatant is assisted by the realization that the election does not come out of their individual efforts and works, but by divine grace. The election is genuinely embodied as a spiritual recognition that physical and selfish desires and agendas will decrease and, simultaneously, divine desires and agendas will increase. The spiritual choice in the Fourth Week is then incarnated progressively by sharing and joining in the Passion and resurrection of Jesus.

It is not coincidental that the "Contemplation to Attain Love" is located in the Fourth Week since the love of God revealed in the risen Jesus the Lord is culminated in the new divine milieu in which God is manifest in daily life. The culminating prayer of the *Spiritual Exercises* starts with two aspect of love: love by deeds and mutual love [230, 231]. Love should be manifested by one's practical activities, rather than by hypothetical words. Love is also described as a mutual sharing of what one has and is. Thus, God, who is love, shares with us what he has and is. We would not exist if God did not share life with us out of love. What God desires to

²⁵⁷ Dyckman, Garvin, and Liebert, 230.

share with us is not just physical life on the earth; God also wants to share with us God's own community life. Within the community life of the Trinity, God is continually creating the world with the one intention of inviting all persons into his community. This is a new divine milieu in which we discover God in all aspects of the human life and nature: "finding God in all things." Ignatius directs the exercitant, through contemplation, to look back at the graces of the *Exercises* and at God's gracious gifting in one's own life, savoring this intimate knowledge in gratitude and love [233]. The four points in the contemplation can be described as follows: reflecting on all gifts the Giver offers to the self with deep affection; God's immanence in all of creation; God laboring in all things continually creating the universe; and the source of all gifts as goodness itself.

The appropriate response to the desired grace is to offer ourselves unconditionally to God, "Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will—all that I have and possess. You, Lord, have given all that to me. I now give it back to you, O Lord. All of it is yours. Dispose of it according to your will. Give me your love and your grace, for that is enough for me" [234]. This selflessness resonates with the state of the good election at the end of the Second Week. Ignatius notes, "for everyone ought to reflect that in all spiritual matters, the more one divests oneself of self-love, self-will, and self-interests, the more progress one will make" [189]. This is the crux of the religious experiences of Ignatian spirituality: you find God in all things only insofar as your self is mortified in all things.²⁵⁸

During the culmination of the *Spiritual Exercises*, the "Contemplation to Attain Love," the election is discovered as the manifested 'deed' of mutual loving between God and the human being who gives thanks for the grace of gifts of God out of the interior intimate knowledge of

²⁵⁸ George A. Aschenbrenner, *Stretched for Greater Glory: What to Expect from the Spiritual Exercises* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004), 140.

Jesus. The retreatants in the election might seek for the will of God out of their mutual love combined with their desire to give themselves unconditionally to God. The choice or decision made out of their free will is accord with the choice made by God's will. This kind of state of life equips one also to seek and discern God's laboring and creating the universe, which could be uncovered in the individual moment of life. The election therefore is, beyond its physical or practical choices, or regardless of its productivity or concreteness, a holistic spiritual engagement to tune one's will and life vocation with the will and life of God. It is not static but is a process, characterized by progressive activities of human beings in pursuit of ongoing continuous discernment in daily settings, avoiding viewing the one-time choice or decision as the will of God. The election is the most active and positive holistic commitment of the exercitant to embody mutual love as the form of the deed in every moment and place.

We have explored the different features of the election progressively discovered in the four different weeks of the *Spiritual Exercises*. The next half of this research will investigate four constitutive elements of the election: desire, indifference, imaginative contemplation, and discernment. Regardless of whether they occupies some part of the *Exercises*, the four interior faculties of human nature play a critical role in constituting the whole dimension of the election.

Four Constitutive Components for Election

Indifference as Fundamental Disposition

Indifference for Ignatius implies the interior prerequisite or fundamental disposition of human beings to make choices corresponding to the purpose of a life created by God, contrary to the common definition in English usage, 'lack of interest.'²⁵⁹ The significance of indifference in

²⁵⁹ Merriam Webster Dictionary, "Indifference," <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/indifference> (accessed April 1, 2012)

the *Spiritual Exercises* is found in the Principle and Foundation, in which Ignatius notes indifference as the primary state of the human being or human responses to God [23]. In the anthropological vision of Ignatius, the chief aim of the human being is to praise, reverence and serve God, and all creatures should be employed to fulfill this end. It is intrinsically implied that all human faculties should become the means for this end, and any other means to hamper the achievement of the end should be taken away. This procedure demands a reorientation of life, reorienting the life and human order by removing that which is disordered.

Accomplishing the ultimate purpose of the human being should begin with a new tool to enhance a different state of life, which reorients it out of disorder: indifference. Indifference is similar to but has a different focus from freedom. Ignatius also mentions in several different places, including the Fifth Annotation [5], that indifference indicates the interior prerequisite or fundamental disposition of human beings to make choices corresponding to the purpose of a life created by God.²⁶⁰ The state of indifference reflects the attitude of interior preparedness to follow the ways of Jesus even if it destines one to choose sickness over health, poverty over wealth, dishonor over honor, and so on, as described in the Principle and Foundation.²⁶¹ Rather than preferring one virtue to another, it insinuates the resolute willingness to follow the way of Jesus wherever or whichever. This aspect of indifference reemerges in the meditation on the Three

²⁶⁰ Many commentators agree that spiritual freedom is the desired fruit of *Spiritual Exercises*. Michael Buckley articulates however that freedom in the Fifth Annotation should take initial steps in the developmental model, freedom—liberty—election. For details, see Michael Buckley, "Freedom, Election and Self-Transcendence," in *Ignatian Spirituality in a Secular Age*, ed. George P. Schner (Waterloo, Ont., Canada: Laurier University Press, 1984), 65-89.

²⁶¹ It is noteworthy for the clear understanding of the exercitant that the focus of Ignatius is on leaving out completely the human will or using the methods for the bettering off their lives. This statement plays a crucial role in helping the retreatant to meditate on sin three times in the First Week, which embodies the reorientation of the life: reordering life within the new milieu of God replaces the disordered life. However, this paper is also aware that Ignatius did not reject the important role of the human wills as the indispensable partner to accompany with God's.

Classes of Person [157]. As already explored above, by identifying with the third type of person, the seekers root their decision in love and their desire for true freedom, to choose with “indifference” that which God most desires.²⁶²

As the fundamental disposition, the important role of indifference is accelerated in describing the attitude of one who wishes to face the First Method of the Third Time Election [179]. Intrinsically reminding the retreatant of the Principle and Foundation, Ignatius articulates the state of indifference as the state of “the middle, like the pointer of a balance.” A similar expression can also be found in the Fifteenth Annotation, “standing by like the pointer of a scale in equilibrium [15].”²⁶³

What indicates a state of balance or equilibrium prior to the deliberation? The soul is not agitated by diverse spirits and uses its natural faculties in freedom and peace [177], without the compulsions that bear upon the mind from thoughts, called elsewhere “from without.” There is an absence of external or internal hindrance, and like water when the rocks and obstacles are removed, memory and intellect and choice can move unhindered. The authenticity of the election is hence guaranteed for one making the Exercises when the indifference—the balance or equilibrium— would be embodied as the fundamental disposition in the interior motions (feelings, thinking, willing, etc.).

As is similar with the First Week, indifference briefly but strikingly reveals its significance in the Fourth Week, in the Contemplation to Attain Love. In the *first point*, the retreatant is invited to reflect on God the giver and on him or herself as the receiver [234]. An

²⁶² Dyckman, Garvin, and Liebert, 201. More details may be found on page 10 in this paper.

²⁶³ This research is clearly conscious that the retreatant is not directly approaching the Annotation, but the director is. Thus, it must be noted that through the introduction to the Election [169] the retreatant learns about indifference, and thus the advice concerning indifference from director must be complementary.

awareness of God's love and a consciousness of God's goodness to the retreatant disposes him or her with an indifferent soul who offers him or herself wholeheartedly to God.

This exploration of indifference reveals not only that it is considered specifically as the interior prerequisite for making good election, but that it also extends into the fundamental disposition of the retreatant during the whole process of the Exercises. According to Ignatius, the considerable value of indifference is uncovered in its primary role in the election since it disposes the retreatant to choose what is more conducive to some end. The chief aim of human beings is to conform themselves freely and entirely to what God chooses for them. Indifference "leads us to desire the will of God so strongly that we wish to choose the better way of praising, reverencing, and serving God."²⁶⁴

In relation to desire, Ignatian indifference seems not to represent a lack of desire, but it must be understood in relation to the deeper desire, given by the Spirit, to do whatever conduces a person more to the praise, reverence and service of God. Even though Ignatius did not put it this way, the biblical concept of the *Kenosis* drawn from the Pauline letter to the Philippians (2:6-11) most appropriately expresses the state of the soul in the state of indifference as the dispositional equilibrium sufficient for following the divine desire to the extent necessary in order to empty oneself and to fill with the desire of God.

*Eliciting the Great Desires*²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ English, 36.

²⁶⁵ This title is borrowed from the remarkable article on the desire in the Ignatian context, written by Edward Kinerk, S.J. see details in Edward Kinerk, "Eliciting the Great Desires: Their Place in the Spirituality of the Society of Jesus," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 16/5 (November 1984): 1-29. This paper defines desire as the neutral inclination of human interior, which readily affected by the inner forces.

Desire for Ignatius is “a spiritual desire, born of God, faithfully accepted, and submitted to the discretion of charity.”²⁶⁶ Indeed, desire drove him irresistibly throughout his life. For instance, while recuperating at Loyola, Ignatius surprisingly encountered the appearance of new and intense desires for the service of God.²⁶⁷ On the road to Montserrat, he felt a great desire to imitate the saints and formed “a resolve to serve Our Lord.”²⁶⁸ It is relevant to note that Ignatius depicts his life as driven by spiritual desire; he is a man of great desires. Henceforth, for him the primary role of the *Exercises* is to foster desire.

Ignatius surely regards desire as a fundamental influence on our current shape of life, vocation, spirituality and relationship with God. Depending upon which desires drive our soul, the direction of life, vocation, or relation with God is considerably determined.²⁶⁹ It is certain that Ignatius was convinced that it is only by attending to our desires that we may discover our basic wants, search for our vocation and finally encounter our deepest self, the image of God within. When desire is transformed, the life direction will also be changed. Identifying which desires drive our spirit or soul is the main task for Ignatius in the spiritual practices. This is why Ignatius frequently directs the retreatant: “Ask for what you desire,” and then suggests what that desire might be in the Exercises [48, 55, 104, 152, 193, 203].²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ James L. Connor and Woodstock Theological Center., *The Dynamism of Desire: Bernard J.F. Lonergan, on the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, Series 3: Original Studies, Composed in English (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2006), 37.

²⁶⁷ ‘Autobiography [7]’ in Ignatius and George E. Ganss, *Ignatius of Loyola : The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 70.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 73-74.

²⁶⁹ Philip Sheldrake, *Befriending Our Desires* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, 1994), 29-31.

²⁷⁰ e.g. “the Third Prelude will be to ask for what I desire. Here it will be ask for an interior knowledge of our Lord, who became human for me, that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely [104].”

Eliciting the great or deepest desire is the primary goal of all spiritual practices for Ignatius. The great desire is explicitly stated in the Principle and Foundation, “to praise, reverence and serve God [23].” It is not startling that Ignatius invites the exercitant to be aware of his or her desire in the Annotation and notes that the journey to elicit the great desire begins with the awareness and offering of the desire to the Lord [5]. The *Exercises* are devised to lead the retreatant to notice that selfish, impulsive or physical desire is gradually placated, and the great desire sprouts forth as the main motivation of the soul. Hence, another way to put it is that the *Exercises* is a spiritual journey to foster the spiritual and great desire within the soul sufficiently to desire what God desires.

Given that, indifference can be identified as a type of desire in its purified form, which allows it to reach a level where ardor and discreet love prevail.²⁷¹ This also underlies the shifting of desires and becomes the stuff of discernment of spirits since it generates the dynamics of the interior or spiritual motion such as consolation or desolation. In addition, to move toward the deepest desire, Ignatius directs us to use our imagination in our contemplation of the biblical accounts since this urges us toward a vision beyond our mundane experiences. Imaginative contemplation clears out our old images and readies us for new ones given by the Holy Spirit. The new images spur us to allow the new and great desire in our soul to prevail.²⁷²

Entering each week of the *Spiritual Exercises*, the seekers’ desire is supposed to go progressively through the developmental procedures. In the First Week, the exercitant might initially encounter the miserable or embarrassing, the world that is derived from selfish or impulsive desires. And Ignatius directs the seeker to purify these desires with a deep recognition

²⁷¹ Connor and Woodstock Theological Center, 40.

²⁷² Elizabeth Liebert, *The Way of Discernment : Spiritual Practices for Decision Making*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 23-28 and 36.

of God's grace. Experiencing God's mercy in deep gratitude, the retreatant is led to ask himself or herself, "What should I do for Christ?" Ignatius expects the retreatant to respond with much fervor, with new desire out of the work of Holy Spirit.

In the Second Week, the underlying function of desire is specified in the series of the Two Standards, the Three Classes and the Three Kinds of Humility. Passing through the process of choice making in the different contexts, the desires are purified, nurtured and sparked into a greater desire to know, love and serve the Lord, saying, "that I may desire and know what will be more pleasing to his Divine Goodness [151]." In the Election session, Ignatius especially requires rational scrutiny of desire in the method of the Third Time [177], and for doing so, the two methods are articulated [179-188].

The critical role of our desire in the choice of a life vocation, which is fundamentally important in Ignatian spirituality, is usually examined in the context of the Second Week. It is plausible that Ignatius implies identifying our authentic desires essentially makes the choice for our vocation, since the more honestly we try to identify our authentic desire, the more we can identify who we truly are. This draws us into the ultimate path, and our most authentic desires spring ultimately from the deep wells of our being where the longing for God runs freely. That is, the desire reflects God's own desire, God's longing, for the world as well as for each of us particularly. The more profoundly we reach into ourselves, the more we experience desires that are both uniquely our own and also uniquely God-given. In this sense, our deepest desire is discovered in which the divine desire for our soul is located. This is the culminating locus where both the great desire and the election are convergent: The choice for a life vocation can be embodied only if our deepest desire is discovered within God's desire.

In the Third Week, the contemplation of Christ suffering on account of our sins fosters a still-greater desire—a desire that is created from the desire that is motivated by God’s own love for his creatures. Following the Passion of Christ leads the exercitant to face the fearful moment of choice of whether or not to take part in the suffering and dying process with Jesus. It demands the retreatant to move out of selfish or destructive desire so that it becomes a pivotal chance to refine or crystalize the desires.

In the Contemplation to Attain Love of the Fourth Week, the *Exercises* reach their climax when Ignatius presents the motives for loving God with all one’s heart and mind, imagination and will: “I will ponder with deep affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much he has given me of what he possesses, and consequently how he, the same Lord desires to give me even his very self, in accordance with his divine design” [234]. This elucidates Ignatius’s endeavor to show that the purpose of the state of desire is ultimately to attain the love of God, no matter how and where. Here the purified or distilled desire seems to be interchangeable with ‘attaining the Love.’ It stretches out the desire into the core of Ignatian spirituality, “finding God in all things,” the desire to discover the will of God pervasively prevailing in all creatures and to accomplish the divine will within.

This research tries to verify that running through Ignatius’s spirituality of desire is the initial quest for spiritual freedom, freedom from the misplaced or superficial desires that imprison us (what he called ‘disordered attachments’) and the active quest for the deepest desire, the ever-greater ability to center human desire on God. Those who give and make the *Exercises* are conscious of the fact that desire originates from God as grace, not from ourselves.²⁷³ The idea that the desire originates from God is critical in shifting our attention from our limited capacity

²⁷³ William A. Barry and Ignatius, *Finding God in All Things: A Companion to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, 1991), 122.

to accomplish the will of God to transcending grace, which is the most significant resource for the retreatant. Then, this fundamental presupposition can anchor the idea that desire and election are the grace of God. This enables us to state that the election can be incarnated by choosing what God desires. Desire is the internal fundamental aspect of the election, and the election is the external manifestation of desire.

*Imaginative Contemplation as Impetus*²⁷⁴

One of the most salient features of the *Spiritual Exercises* is readily recognizable as Ignatius' emphasis on the imagination. What Ignatius constantly requires of the retreatant is, above all, an exercise of imagination. Ignatius believes strongly that achieving the conversion and freedom which is the main goals of the *Spiritual Exercises* requires that the imagination be fully engaged.²⁷⁵ He specifically notes its significance in this statement, "I am to see with the eyes of the imagination the road from Nazareth to Bethlehem; considering its length, breadth..." [112]. For him, the appeal to the imagination is the inevitable path to the ultimate end of the spiritual exercises.

What is imagination as a human capacity? In what ways have humans employed imagination in their lived spiritual experiences? In the modern scientific era, imagination in the epistemological landscape has been dismissed except in the cognitive sphere. However, recent cognitive research has acknowledged the intimate connection between intellect and imagination. Any cognitive activity is able to accomplish its function through the imagination in such a way

²⁷⁴ Imagination is defined as "the act or power of forming a mental image of something not present to the senses or never before wholly perceived in reality." Merriam Webster Dictionary, "Imagination," <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imagination> (accessed April 1, 2012).

²⁷⁵ Brendan Byrne, "To See with the Eyes of the Imagination...: Scripture in the Exercises and Recent Interpretation," *The Way Supplement* 72 (Autumn 1991): 6.

that it complements conceptual and intellectual approaches to truth.²⁷⁶ That is, imagination clearly provides a decisive way to overcome the dualistic view derived from acquiring knowledge and reading a text.²⁷⁷ But it also plays a bridge role in enabling the mundane to express the sacred. Imagination enables one to see a double vision of reality which makes it explicitly possible for humans to perceive that what is revealed in Jesus is that humans are in the place where God is present.

Consequently, humans can dwell in two dimensions at once, composed of their ordinary events and of God's presence in these events, without contradiction.²⁷⁸ It is thus legitimate to say that the imagination is an indispensable medium for the experience of God. It is intrinsic to human nature; it is a natural instrument of religious and spiritual experiences. Why is it so? This is so, as Fischer rightly observes, because imagination "leads from earth to heaven in human desire to God; at the same time, it leads from heaven to earth in God's desire, working through the willing cooperation of human beings, for salvation of the world."²⁷⁹ Consequently, imagination is the human capacity to experience the divine mystery.

Imagination and Ignatius's Autobiography

²⁷⁶ Dyckman, Garvin, and Liebert, 122.

²⁷⁷ Antonio T. De Nicolás and Ignatius, *Ignatius De Loyola, Powers of Imagining: A Philosophical Hermeneutic of Imagining through the Collected Works of Ignatius De Loyola, with a Translation of These Works* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 32.

²⁷⁸ Kathleen Fischer, "The Imagination in Spirituality," *The Way Supplement* 66, no. Autumn 1989 (1989): 98.

²⁷⁹ Paul G Crowley, "Between Earth and Heaven: Ignatian Imagiantion and the Aesthetics of Liberation," in *Through a Glass Darkly: Essays in the Religious Imagination*, ed. John C Hawley (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), 63.

Ignatius of Loyola is considered one of the most important contributors to our understanding of the role of the imagination in experiencing the divine mystery. It is well known that while recovering from his wounds, Ignatius repeatedly read the only two books in his house, *Vita Christi* by Ludolph of Saxony (1314-1378) and the *Flos Sanctorum* by James of Voragine. There is a consensus that Ignatius first became conscious of spiritual matters through this reading. Imagining the life of Jesus and the saints progressively fostered his spiritual senses and his desire to follow Jesus and imitate the saints. “What if I should do what St. Francis did, and found good, always proposing to himself what was difficult and burdensome?” [7]. Even before his injury and convalescence, Ignatius was given to imagining himself as a knightly hero winning the favor of a great lady. He would spend hours in such daydreams. However, the Gospel stories and the lives of the saints fired Ignatius’s imagination so that he gradually noticed how God’s spirit helped him to receive the lasting joy of being with Christ. It is valid to assume that engagement with the Gospel stories and the lives of the saints through the kernel of imaginative contemplation helps shape authentic images of God, the self and the world.²⁸⁰ Most of all, Ignatius found that the image of the humble Christ was his principal image of God and helped him understand his own inability to gain total purity through his own efforts.

Ignatius’s *Autobiography* presents many accounts of encountering divine images, visions, and seeing with the interior eyes, such as the images of the Madonna with the child Jesus [10],

²⁸⁰ Even though the specific methods are introduced in the Second Week of Spiritual Exercises, it is helpful to consider briefly the characteristics of imaginative contemplation. Contemplation employing imagination is supported by will, memory and intellect as opposed to meditation. Imaginative contemplation asks us not only to recall but actually to recreate the events prompted by the reading of the Scripture and the action of the Holy Spirit, both by situating oneself imaginatively within it and by desiring interior knowledge of it. “Meditation employs reasoning, supported by memory and imagination, contemplation employs imagination, supported by memory and reasoning.” Dyckman, Garvin, and Liebert, 118.

seeing the humanity of Christ in Manresa [29], and Christ's appearance to him [41, 44].²⁸¹ It is interesting that Ignatius firmly believes that the divine images are apprehended through the imaginative facility. The *Autobiography* maintains that it does not matter in the end whether God created the good image in the soul or if he imprinted it on the soul. The imagination is thought of as the "word of God."²⁸² The *Autobiography* furthermore indicates that these sights become the main sources for Ignatius' discerning whether the divine images come originally from God, even if he sometimes receives very great consolation by the images for a considerable time.

For Ignatius, these experiences resulted in at least two consequences: First, his interior vision seems to play a striking role in incurring Ignatius's desire to imitate Jesus and his way of life. Second these experiences prompt him to realize that imaginative contemplation disposes him for the divine mystery with spiritual affection.²⁸³ His experiences with imaginative contemplation of divine visions heavily influenced Ignatius in his composition of the *Spiritual Exercises* since the book confirms the practice of imaginative contemplation of Christ in the Gospel mysteries and many of the methods of praying which he later taught in the exercises.

Imaginative Contemplation in the *Spiritual Exercises*

²⁸¹ Clarifying the notion of *Autobiography*, Boyle calls into question whether Loyola's *Acts* is real autobiography. She is suspicious of assumptions that it is completely factual because the account of Ignatius's life was likely to go through at least five steps at the hands of *da Camara*: audition, memorization, notation, composition, and transcription. She maintains that the text was invented by imitating Ignatius's story rather than by copying what he said word by word. *Da Camara* listened to Ignatius, and repeated what he heard. Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle and eScholarship (Online service), *Loyola's Acts the Rhetoric of the Self* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1-21.

²⁸² *Ibid*, 40.

²⁸³ In Ignatian Spirituality, the term Affection can be characterized as particular motions that arise from sensations, reflections about sensations, and choices about following them (affectivity, intellect, will). Thus, it is more inclusive than feelings, because affection includes reflections on feelings and the choices with respect to them. Therefore it can be used interchangeably with "tendency," "inclination," "propensity," and "attachment." Ivens and Ignatius, 2.

The First Week

In the Principle and Foundation of the First Week the retreatant is reminded that the purpose of the *Spiritual Exercises* is to bring about a transformation in human nature in such a manner that a person is able to make decisions in conformity with the will of God (Election). Entering into the first week with the 'Examen' prayer,²⁸⁴ the first exercise focuses on the "composition" for meditation about the three sins: the sins of Angels [50]; the sins of Adam and Eve [51]; and the sins of those is gone to hell [52]. In the next composition, the imaginative meditation on Christ suspended on the cross takes place in Colloquy [53]. These processes intend to direct the retreatant "to see in imagination and to consider my soul as imprisoned in this corruptible body and my whole...self as an exile in this valley among brute animals" [47]. What Ignatius initially proposes through this meditation is to consider the soul's imprisonment in the corruptible body.

However, "the inner knowledge of my sins and an abhorrence for them" [63] does not aim to cause guilt about the contaminated human nature but instead aims to make the exercitant become fully aware of human inability to make a good decision in conformity with the will and desire of God. Furthermore, the ultimate endeavor is to recreate the image of God as loving and merciful. In imaginative contemplation, the Trinity revealed in the cross is imagined as blessing us, presenting itself to us, laboring for us, and energizing us for our salvation.²⁸⁵ Through the image of a vulnerable person, God is present as constant love. This exercise in imagination

²⁸⁴ The purpose of the *Examen* Prayer, one of the unique prayers derived from Ignatian Spirituality, is to prepare retreatants for the meditations of the First Week by opening their eyes to know the sins of their past life. "Official Directory of 1599," in M. Palmer, *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 313.

²⁸⁵ English, 253.

brings up gratitude as the proper human response, and the retreatant is led into realization of the Grace of the First Week which is to see oneself as a loved sinner.

Now I discuss the “Additional Directives” [73], which direct the imaginative contemplation to a sinner in chains [74 & 85]. This series of exercises pertains to penance, which leads to self-denial and to being in accord with God’s desire. Presumably, the experience of the interior and exterior penances prompt the imagination about the passion and pain of Christ on the Cross in such a way that it enhances the exercitants’ inner awakening to the reality that the loved sinner is also a responsible companion to Christ. This new awareness is considered as the potential locus for making a life decision.

The Second Week

Imaginative contemplation is introduced more fully to the retreatant in the Second Week. Ignatius urges the retreatant to seek “intimate knowledge of our Lord, who has become man for me, that I may love him more and follow him more closely [104].” In imaginative contemplation of the Incarnation and the Nativity, seekers are invited to imagine what is behind the text. The imagination enables people to go beyond the gospel text, recreating the events “both by situating oneself imaginatively within it and by desiring interior knowledge of it.”²⁸⁶ By seeking to be intimately present in the events, people arrive at a new understanding of themselves.

In the composition of the place of the Nativity, for instance, Ignatius triggers free imagination by saying,

Here it will be to see in imagination the road from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Consider its length and breadth, whether it is level or winds through valleys and hills. Similarly, look at the place or cave of the Nativity: How big is it, or small? How long or high? And how is it furnished? [112].

²⁸⁶ Dyckman, Garvin, and Liebert, 119.

Even though Ignatius had visited the Holy Land, he does not tell us how the terrain looks in reality. Each person is free to imagine what the terrain and place might look like. In imaginative contemplation proper, he again advises us to look at the people, to listen to what they are saying, and to consider what they are doing. He also adds a new character to the scene, a “maidservant,” and suggests that “I will make myself a poor, little, and unworthy slave, gazing at them, contemplating them, and serving them in their needs, just as if I were there” [114]. Such suggestions open the individual’s imagination to see themselves in the biblical scene in ways in which Ignatius expects that God will ultimately reveal the desire to know Jesus more intimately.

Another place featuring the imagination is the fifth contemplation of the first day, when the five senses are harnessed to the subject matter of the first and second contemplations. I note here the how *Directory* clarifies the use of the five senses:

It [the 5th exercise] consists in using our imagination to see the persons, to hear their words or any other sounds, to touch or kiss places or persons. The sense of smell is applied by our Father Ignatius to smelling the soul’s fragrance from God’s gifts, and the sense of taste to tasting its sweetness; both of these betoken a kind of presence of the reality or person we are meditating, joined with a relish and heartfelt love for them.²⁸⁷

The above passage clearly indicates that the aim of this mode of prayer is to render the events of salvation ‘present’ in our minds and to obtain the direct experience of love and divine consolation which is the utmost purpose of the whole Spiritual Exercises.²⁸⁸ Ivens correctly spells out the primary process of the Second Week: election and growth in the true life taught by Christ.²⁸⁹ Both are unquestionably intertwined in the second week since the former points to how

²⁸⁷ Ignatius and Martin E. Palmer, *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises : The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 321 (no. 154).

²⁸⁸ Ernest Ferlita, "The Road to Bethlehem-Is It Level or Winding?: The Use of the Imagination in the Spiritual Exercises," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 29/5 (November 1997): 17. This is quoted originally from Hugo Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), 194.

²⁸⁹ Ivens and Ignatius, 74.

the imaginative contemplation of Christ's life gives us examples of various states of life, and the latter shows how we begin to explore and inquire "in what state or way of life doe the Divine Majesty wish us to serve him?"[135]. Ignatius seems to be convinced that imagination offers the possibility of discovering what our true feelings are by imagining a certain situation and seeing ourselves in that situation.²⁹⁰

Ignatius therefore proposes imaginative contemplation "On the Three Classes of Persons," moving toward "Making a Good Election" [149-157]. The retreatant imagines a considerable amount of money, but not purely or properly for the love of God. Despite all the desire of all three classes of people to get rid of their attachment to money, they proceed in three different ways. As we put ourselves in each person's place, Ignatius asks us directly to imagine how we feel about each situation. The desired hope is clearly to discover in oneself feelings similar to the person of the third class, which is someone who desires to get rid of all attachments.

The second method of the Third Time in the Election is where imagination plays a significant role. Equipped well by the previous exercises, facilitating the imaginative contemplation culminates in the election process. Herein Ignatius advises us to imagine three situations: first, giving advice to others in the same situation from an objective perspective; second, considering the situation from the perspective of your deathbed; third, imagining yourself on judgment day [184-188]. While engaging with these imaginary situations, retreatants are asked to make a decision for themselves in each situation. Similar to the way in which the retreatant discovers feelings through this exercise, they are advised to make the same decision in the process of election. Significantly, Ignatius offers imaginative contemplation for discerning one's affective knowing and decision making (election).

²⁹⁰ Ferlita, 18.

Ignatius' request for imaginative contemplation in the decision or choice is maintained in the Third and Fourth Weeks, as it was in the Second Week. Sharing the Passion and the Resurrection of Jesus can be an embodied experience of the retreatant by employing imaginative contemplation, which triggers essentially internal motions including the affections, cognition, will and desires. It is a fundamental resource for the retreatant in enabling decisions or choices that involve following Jesus' way, to the extent possible, in the culmination of the *Exercises*, the Contemplation to Attain to Love.

Ignatius's ultimate purpose in the *Spiritual Exercises* is chiefly initiated and progressively actualized by imaginative contemplation in this part of the election process as well as the landscape of the *Exercises*. Let us examine the intimate relationship between election and imagination within the horizon of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

Imaginative Contemplation as Impetus for Election

We have explored indifference as a constitutive element for the election. What about the interactive dynamics between indifference, desire and imaginative contemplation in the election? Rigidly speaking, dismissing indifference in the further practice of the imagination is highly unlikely to produce the pure and uncontaminated images possible from imaginatively contemplating the biblical accounts, since the imagining process would be preoccupied with attachments that range from desire elicited by physical objects to memories of the past. Without doubt, a lack of indifference distracts retreatants not only from authentic imaginative contemplation but also from achieving a new interior knowledge of God, self, and the world. This will result in a resistance to allowing our authentic desires to conform our choice to what God chooses.

From the very beginning, Ignatius urges the exercitant “to ask God our Lord for what I want and desire” [45], because the positive anthropology of Ignatius enables him to see desires as being implanted in us in virtue of our unique creation.²⁹¹ Therefore reading and following these innate desires is a part of realizing our integrity, which involves the Holy Spirit working through these desires. The Holy Spirit accommodates our desires to conform to God’s desire. Being equipped with the real desires, the personal relationship of a retreatant with Jesus Christ is now established in a foundational fashion. Barry supports this view by saying that a true relationship is based on authentic desires. Unless we engage our desires, developing a relationship with Jesus or God is not authentic.²⁹²

Because of this cultivation and enhancing of the intimate relationship with Jesus, Ignatius asks people to take advantage of the power of the imagination. The *Spiritual Exercises* claim, “Imagine yourself before Christ on the cross and ask yourself what you want to do for Christ; imagine yourself before Christ the King and see if you do not desire to respond to his call; imagine yourself with Christ in the Garden and see if you don’t desire to experience sorrow with Christ?” Through it Ignatius encourages retreatants to “see if it fits you and make it your own.” Imaginative contemplation takes place in a subjective way, so that each individual has his or her own style or method of imagining the biblical account. This exercise prompts us to discover how essential our desires are in the process of making a choice. In other words, the authenticity of desires is vindicated by the way in which one makes a choice. A desire that comes from God is a decision that is made in conformity with God’s desires. This desire is a crucial element, then, in

²⁹¹ In comparison with the contemporary Protestant understanding of human nature, Ignatius’ anthropology was firmly in accord with the Catholic traditional perspective on human cooperation with divine grace.

²⁹² William A. Barry, *Letting God Come Close: An Approach to the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises* (Chicago: Jesuit Way, 2001), 28 and 40.

making an authentic election. Consequently, desires are elicited by imaginative contemplation and election is informed by desires.

Imagination and Election

We have acknowledged that the *Spiritual Exercises* is an instrument designed for the purpose of discovering God's will [1]. All details of the practices aim at determining the will of God. Everything, all the meditations, all the contemplations, all the rules are at the service of the "Election," of the making of a vital decision. Ignatius says as much in his Introduction to Election, when he points out how the imaginative contemplation of Christ's life gives us examples of various states of life and how, "while continuing our (imaginative) contemplations of his life," we "begin simultaneously to explore and inquire: in which state or way of life does the divine majesty wish us to serve him?"[135]

Election becomes embodied in many of the imaginative contemplative practices as part of the process of asking the retreatant to choose a way of life. The four meditations in the Second Week, Call of the King, the Two Standards, the Three Classes of People, and the Three Kinds of Humility, shape and nurture the seeker's disposition to be in conformity with God's will. As the retreatant contemplates imaginatively each subject matter step by step, imagination at first opens his or her inner eyes to challenge the retreatants' present life, and it also leads to a recognition that the retreatant falls short of imitating Jesus' life. Next, the imagination ignites the retreatants' dispositional change by firing his or her desires (Spirit-given desires) to follow and imitate the life of Jesus. In addition, imagination inflames the desire to form one's mind and soul to attain a disposition of indifference. Through this process, the retreatant is implicitly directed to the election exercises of seeking and finding and responding to God's here-and-now word. This

implies that imagination plays a formative role in preparing the human disposition to make an authentic election in accord with Principle and Foundation. It is apparent that without dispositional transformation by imagination, the way to election is fruitless.

Meditating on the biblical text is another good way to prompt imaginative contemplation. Imagining the biblical stories allows the historical events to be ‘present and actual’ and also allows the retreatant to encounter Jesus in personal and existential ways. The encounter shapes the interior knowledge of Jesus and leads them to confess, “I do know who Jesus is.” This interior knowledge also improves the use of the five senses in meditation, and the retreatant becomes noticeably aware that the knowledge residing within the retreatants’ mind and soul becomes the primary resource for making an election.

It is in the second method of the third time of election where my argument concerning the formative role of the imagination in actualizing election culminates. The three situations direct the exercitant to contemplate them imaginatively and with the purpose of looking at the election process from three different perspectives: a third-person perspective; a perspective from one’s deathbed; and the perspective of judgment day. Ivens identifies two reasons why an exercitant might not be able to make an election. (1) “He or she is not at the moment faced by any sufficiently substantial issue; (2) even though the situation might contain matter for election, the exercitant has no readiness of will to deal with it.”²⁹³ He explains that the failure of the election originates either from insufficient experienced knowledge by imaginative contemplation, or with one’s lack of resolution. That is, the fruit of the imagination is to bring about renewal and transformation of the retreatants’ perspective through looking at the decision from an objective viewpoint or a critical life situation. Imagination enables one to make a tentative election that confirms the will of God.

²⁹³ Ivens and Ignatius, 144.

The configuration of the relationship between imagination and election now becomes more obvious. My examination of this topic has demonstrated several features of the dynamic relation between imagination and election in the Ignatian writings. First, indifference or spiritual freedom is critical for imaginative contemplation. Second, imaginative contemplation makes situations directed by the *Spiritual Exercises* to be “present” to the retreatant. Third, these experiences ask the retreatant to strengthen his or her desire to make a choice for the great desire. Fourth, the most noticeable contribution to imagination to election lies in shaping one’s disposition to seek, find and respond to God’s will.

Consequently, according to Ignatius election without imagination is likely to be infeasible and unauthentic.²⁹⁴ It is like corporality without a skeleton to support the concrete shape. Election equipped with imagination or imaginative contemplation, however, guarantees tangible outcomes from the attempt to seek and find the will of God. On the other hand, imagination without election is like a daydream or illusion. Imagination elicited or motivated by election produces authentic images of God, the self, and the world and enables a person to realize the will of God. The greater the interdependent and reciprocal mutuality between imagination and election, the more vitality is reflected in each constitutive aspect in the Ignatian context. As emphasized above, election is the end of the *Spiritual Exercises*; imagination is formative and essential impetus to the ends.

The Discernment of spirits

²⁹⁴ This paper acknowledges the election without imagination is considered as possible and authentic. The First Time of the election explicitly indicates the election without any previous causes such as what St. Paul and St. Matthew went through when they followed Christ [175]. Thus, the intimate relationship between the election and imagination gains its relevancy most in the Second and Third Time of the Election.

It is well known that Ignatius of Loyola came on the historical scene as someone to systematize and teach discernment as a spiritual practice. Toner writes that Ignatius was “a man anointed with a most unusual charism to discern spirits and give spiritual counsel. It was his charism of spiritual leadership that most impressed those who know him personally.”²⁹⁵ The primary purpose of discernment for Ignatius originated from his conviction that imaginative contemplation stirs the affections and feelings and inner desire of the retreatant, and examining and discerning the inner motions is the major task in the *Exercises*. For him, therefore, making a better election (choice) demands thorough evaluation and discernment which lead us to examine his two sets of rules related to discernment [313-337].

It is necessary to differentiate between the discernment of God’s will and discernment of spirits, terms that scholars sometimes use interchangeably. Here we focus on the rules of discernment mainly in relation to discerning the spirits from the two different spiritual spheres: holy and evil. But a brief description of the rules will ground our discussion, even though this study will not comment on each rule of discernment. Rather it is appropriate to begin with Ignatius’ mention about the necessity of the discernment of spirits in the form of consolations and desolations in the Second Times of the Election [176], exploring the essential aspect of the discernment of spirits aiding in determining God’s will and of election as practical embodiment.

In order to identify the two different spiritual dynamics—movements of the holy spirit and of the evil spirit [314-315]— Ignatius devised and introduced two significant spiritual or affective movements, which he termed consolation and desolation, in the First set of Rules of Discernment [316-317]. While the former is configured as a spiritual reality that increases the self’s relationship in faith to God’s love, the latter takes a completely opposite track. Thus, these

²⁹⁵ Jules J. Toner, *A Commentary on Saint Ignatius’ Rules for the Discernment of Spirits: A Guide to the Principles and Practice*, 1st ed., No. 5 in Series □--Original Studies, Composed in English (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1982), 8.

two dynamics represent God-centered vs. self-concerned movements. It is significant to note that this is not a dualistic view, in which one belongs exclusively to one or the other. But it is a descriptive terminology that identifies the dominant interior motions in the human experiential sphere. Due to the subtleness of human experiences, it requires care to determine whether a particular movement is coming from one or the other spirit.

Rules for the First Week

Ignatius introduced the several specific tactics in the Rules for the First Week that help the retreatant focus upon ways to discern carefully any desolation they have experienced.²⁹⁶ At first, by pinpointing three chief causes for the desolation [322], Ignatius makes the retreatant conscious of the subtleness of the spiritual or affective movement and argues that in desolation one should not make any change [318], but take the contrasting track against the desolation by engaging more with prayer, meditation and self-examination [319]. Next, Ignatius points out to the exercitant the remarkable fact that desolation implies neither God has abandoned him or her nor that God has given the desolation; the retreatants are invited to learn, even through the desolation, that sufficient grace is always available from God although the seeker might be a capricious lover [320]. Therefore, having patience with hope that God console one soon is the appropriate pose in desolation [321], and this humbleness will appear as consolation [324]. The last significant characteristic is found in the tenth rule, which states that consolation and desolation have a spontaneous fluctuation inherently embedded in them; one always follows the other [323]. Ignatius finished the first set (First Week) of the Rules by describing three figures—a woman, a false lover, and a military commander—who portray metaphorically the way the evil

²⁹⁶ It is reasonable that Ignatius is conspicuously conscious of desolation in the first rule with regard to his remarks in the subtitle, “these rules are more suitable to the First Week [313].” It is not relevant to note that this rule is just adjustable to a specific week; rather to the whole retreat.

spirit conducts itself within one's soul, which should be discerned as destructive forces [325-327].

The Second sets of Rule

The Second set of Rules is composed to indicate more complicated or skillful discernment, and it is subtitled "A More Probing (or, Greater) Discernment of Spirits [328]." It is evident that Ignatius implies the specific spiritual situation in which the First Rules are not applicable, and therefore the critical question is, "How may a person dedicated to God discern when the spiritual consolation they feel is authentically of God, and how does that person know when their good and holy thoughts will truly lead to that which is 'all good' and 'inclined to all good?'" In more radical way, "Does all consolation come from the holy spirit?" The second set of Rules primarily presupposes the idea that all genuine consolation originates from the Holy Spirit, but the good affections and feelings should not be considered as consolation without critical discernment. The ultimate sources of the consolation should therefore be discerned.

Similar with the first rule of the First Week, Ignatius starts in the first rule of the Second Week with a discussion of the contrasting spirits and the proper responses, which are giving to God and his angels true joy and spiritual gladness opposing the enemy militating against that joy by using specious reasoning, subtleties, and persistent deceits [329]. And he notes that consolation without preceding cause implies the experiences of being taken up into God's love [330]. It is evident here that the seekers in this consolation would not need to employ any rule of discernment, which is apparently corresponding to the First Time of the Election, the apostolic vocation of the St. Paul and St. Matthew following Christ [175]. Given this, Ignatius urges the retreatant to be strongly conscious that there is consolation with preceding cause that may be of

either the good or the bad spirit [331]. This is the critical locus where the thorough and wise discernment is required during the Exercises.

In the fourth rule, Ignatius describes how the enemy attempts to deceive a person “under the appearance of good,” and those deceived by the evil spirit would be “Christified” in outlook, but still following disordered motivation and self-centered choice making [332].²⁹⁷

Characterizing authentic consolation as consistently bearing good fruits throughout the beginning, middle, and the end, Ignatius states that the holy or good intention in the beginning could be distorted by the disguised evil spirit in the middle and the end so it is essential to discern whether the influence of the bad spirit can be intervened in the middle of the journey. Disquiet, disturbance, lack of peace and shrinking generosity are the signs of the disguised evil spirit, so that the peace, tranquility and quiet initially given rise would be weakened, disquieted and disturbed [333]. In the sixth, he maintains to review the deception perceived from the beginning, middle to the end so as to uncover where the deception took place and to comprehend what the typical strategies or tactics of the masked evil spirit were or are [334]. This scrutinization of the deception of the evil spirit is then asked for working backward from the end to the beginning. This deliberate procedure significantly equips one’s discernment to recognize not only the disguised evil spirit immediately in the beginning, but also the hidden tactics the evil spirits potentially use for future. Now, Ignatius encourages the retreatant by saying that through the process he or she is able to look for the subtle affective resonance and related thoughts so that they are prepared sufficiently to discern their spiritual origin even before the thoughts can begin to unfold [335].

In the eighth rule, the director leads the seekers to be aware of the afterglow of consolation with the preceding cause, which may emerge from the seeker’s own reasoning, ideas

²⁹⁷ Ivens and Ignatius, 232.

and judgment. Gallagher explicates this situation as one in which the affective resonance of the consolation remains—“favor and remnants” of consolation, not given immediately by God.²⁹⁸ The retreatant is very likely to recall and reflect on the blessed consolation and may make some proposals, opinions, or decisions that are not grounded within the genuine grace of God. A decision and choice from the afterglow can lead to discouragement, frustration, and even distrust of God. So, with this in-depth training in discernment, with serene spiritual attentiveness, and with the spiritual guidance, the retreatant may confidently rest in the knowledge that the light of the God’s love faithfully guides his or her spiritual journey.

Inner Dynamics of Discernment

As explored above, human desire in Ignatian spirituality is crucial. It is worthwhile to elucidate the association of desire with discernment. One of the primary aims of the *Spiritual Exercises* is the sifting of misplaced, disordered, or superficial desires from the deeper desires flowing from God’s desire. The purpose of sifting our mundane desires in discernment, therefore, is to enable us to distinguish the authentic from the bogus, the deeper from the more superficial, our best desires from those which are less good, the desires of the true self from those of the false, those which are in tune with God’s desires from those which are not. This reflection also aims at recognizing the difference between choices made in freedom, on the one hand and, on the other hand, those based on perhaps unconscious needs or compulsions which tend to control us and restrict the scope of effective freedom. This sifting of our desires helps us to grow toward a condition in which the desires, which are authentic expressions of our true selves, shape and fuel our choices and actions.

²⁹⁸ Timothy M. Gallagher, *Spiritual Consolation : An Ignatian Guide for the Greater Discernment of Spirits* (New York: Crossroad Pub. Co., 2007), 119.

The fact that the affectivity is considered as an underlying object in discernment should not be neglected. Desire evokes certain kinds of feelings and emotions and these become the reliable indicator signaling the current inner motions or spiritual status. Some feelings have their ground in one's most cherished belief, conviction, and desire, so that experiencing one's feelings touches one at the deeper level of oneself—the level of desires, which consciously or unconsciously influences our behavior and life direction. These movements of feeling that we experience can be evoked by events and people in the external world or by our own thoughts, imagination, dreams, our own “inner world.”²⁹⁹ These movements or dynamics are identified as consolation and desolation in Ignatius' *Exercises*.

Given this, the critical role of discernment sheds light upon interpreting and evaluating the arousals and feelings, and particularly the direction in which we are moved by them and the identification of the spirits or desire. For instance, the feeling of shame is perceived either by a faithful man or by an unfaithful person. The former is not desolation, since it challenges him into the spiritual journey with God. The same feelings may have opposite significance for discernment. This awareness equips the retreatant with the spiritual skills to understand that our affective life is interpenetrated with the leading of spirit as much as our most crucial choices are mutually interrelated to the fundamental direction or vocation.

Discernment and Election

It is necessary to remind us here that Ignatius required the seeker to be prepared for the discernment of spirits in the Second Time of the Election [176]. To make a good election demands the delicate and sophisticated skill of the discernment of spirits. The inner motions are generated by influences of the several factors that are too subtle to easily identify which desires,

²⁹⁹ Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, 97.

motions, and affection stem from which spirit. Thus, the implications of making an election are broadly revealed. The first is to disallow any change in the existing decision or choice in the desolation. Despite the desolation, the retreatant is directed to have hope that the next consolation with spiritual resolution will arrive, since the desolation does not simply implies the absence of God.

Next, an election in a time of consolation or of consolation without a preceding cause should be made out of humility. Meanwhile, in terms of perceiving a consolation with preceding causes, a thorough discernment is demanded during the whole procedure from the beginning to the end as to whether the cause stems from the evil spirit masquerading as the holy and good. This implies that the election is a process, not static or a one-time event. The consistent reflection and evaluation of the whole procedure will enhance the seeker's spiritual awareness of what the deceptive tactics of the evil spirit are or are not. The collecting of data or information further equips the retreatant with the antidote so that they will not fall into the same troubles or traps if the evil spirit may use similar approaches later.

In addition, discerning and evaluating the inner motivation of the election is another spiritual gift given by discernment. It increases the consciousness of the seeker in terms of discerning whether the election (or choice) is motivated from the deepest desires in tune with God's or from something else. Discernment reveals that an election out of the inauthentic motivation originates from mundane or disordered desires. Furthermore, Ignatius warns us in the eighth rule of the Second Week that the election or choice making can be mistakenly made in the afterglow situation. That is, stuck in the lingering feelings of favor or the remnant of a past consolation, the seeker makes election or choice that is not given immediately by God, but by his or her motivations and desires.

As already explored, the skills of discernment also equip the exercitant with the spiritual attentiveness to his or her affectivity, which is aroused by the imaginative contemplation in Ignatian context. As the primary source of the discernment in the inner world, affectivity should be discerned and evaluated so that the election will be embodied with the desirable fruits such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22)

Ignatius's endeavor to describe the significant characteristics of the discernment of spirits verifies its substantial role in the election. For Ignatius, the discernment of spirits is highly significant for election since it helps distinguish the holy spirit from evil, the spiritual from mundane, order from disorder, good fruits from bad, and better choices from worse. The discernment between consolation and desolation helps the seeker to perceive the tactics of the evil spirit, to identify the distorted motivation that comes from the masked evil spirit, to purify and cultivate desire within one's soul. Furthermore, discernment prevents an election from being deceived by an evil spirit that is masked as good and holy, and thus the election may be fulfilled in the most authentic mode of consolation. The primary aim of discernment is to help us to make choices that encourage and build on the events and situations that are associated with consolation. Consequently, in the absence of an appropriate discernment process, a genuine procedure and positive outcomes of an election cannot be guaranteed.

Practical Implications of the Election

We have explored the ultimate purpose of election in the context of the *Spiritual Exercises* in a horizontal way from the Principle and Foundation to the Contemplation to Attain Love. Now, a vertical exploration of the topic, ranging from indifference, desire and

contemplation to the discernment, allows us to perceive the implicit and essential components for a genuine election in Ignatian sense. The following questions now need to be addressed: What are the intrinsic dynamics of the four constitutive elements in the election? What are the most appropriate ways to understand the relational dynamics? This study finds that a metaphorical explanation is the most relevant way to delineate the significant dynamics.

Suppose the spiritual election in the Exercises is viewed as a journey or voyage in the ocean. Indifference can be identified as the ballast, the inherent disposition to balance the ship or boat riding on changing waves. Just as a boat that loses its stability could readily be capsized by a wave, the election process without indifference cannot establish the fundamental disposition of its inherent nature. In this metaphor, desire can correspond to a rudder of the ship, which determines the direction of the ship's travel. Just as a ship will navigate in the ocean by maneuvering the rudder, election in the spiritual journey will be led into the direction that desire indicates. When the rudder takes the ship on a determined route in the ocean, the ship is highly likely to approach the final destination. Likewise, when one's good and holy desire is taken in the spiritual practices, the election may approach the most authentic and desirable form.

Next, imaginative contemplation will be compared to the engine of the ship, which is the ultimate impetus for moving the ship into the designed direction. Through imaginative contemplation in each week or phase of the *Exercises*, the journey of the seeker may be triggered to move in the intended direction. The last constitutive element, discernment, can be viewed as the global positioning system (GPS) the ship utilizes in its voyage. In the same way that the GPS indicates the best route the ship should take on moment-by-moment, route-by-route, discernment may guide or direct the route or path of the spiritual journey toward the primary goal of the seeker by sifting which inner motion would lead into the consolation, and ultimately into the

election: manifestation of the will and desire of God in all aspects of the seeker's life via the making of choices. While some routes might be a legitimate way to lead to the destination (consolation), others should be avoided since they could lead to an unintended destination with undesirable outcomes (desolation). The seeker can accomplish his or her ultimate goal for the journey by being equipped with the appropriate discernment skills.

It should be maintained that, in an Ignatian election the absence of a single element among the four could cause undesirable results. When all four elements cooperate simultaneously, the journey can reach its goal. The election for Ignatius requires therefore the four constitutive elements without compromising any of them. That is, the election as the ultimate goal of the Spiritual Exercises implies that indifference, desire, imaginative contemplation, and discernment of spirits should all be drawn upon in the spiritual journey.

A discerned choice

Praising the historical contribution of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius to the Western spiritual tradition, Melloni notes the significance of the fact that Ignatius identified election as union with God.³⁰⁰ Human beings are invited by the gracious works of Holy Spirit to be in union with God, and this is incarnated by the act and art of the choosing in each moment in terms of God's will. Then discernment allows one to act according to God's will in every event in one's life. This understanding leads to an appreciation of the appropriateness of the notion of election in the contemporary Christian spirituality, as well as to confirm the argument of this paper concerning the centrality of the election in the spiritual practices.

³⁰⁰ Melloni, 50.

This endeavor to demonstrate the importance of the concept of Ignatian election for contemporary Christian spirituality will bear desirable fruits when it is rooted in the insights of the contemporary scholars of Ignatian discernment. Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au convincingly assert that human engagement of spiritual discernment should be holistic. Presenting the holistic knowledge of and approach to God within several Christian traditions, they claim that Ignatius's approach to discerning life choice is holistic and organic since it reflects on the all-embracing utilization of the human faculties.³⁰¹ It validates the presupposition that Ignatius's instruction to focus on the inner motions and interior movements implies an emphasis upon the integration of thought, affectivity, imagination and sensation, which is inherent in the election.

Elizabeth Liebert undertakes a critical exploration of the holistic approach to discernment in her book, *The Way of Discernment*.³⁰² With an elaborate delineation of the necessity of spiritual discernment among lay people as well as the professionals in contemporary Christian spiritual practice, she outlines several essential tactics for making a genuine discernment, ranging from memory, intuition, body, imagination to reason, affection and nature. This clearly implies that seeking God's will or desire in the midst of decision and choice should be incarnated by the unceasing endeavor to engage in spiritual discernment everywhere and every time—in other words, in a holistic approach.

This is the appropriate place to discuss the constructive implication of the Ignatian election for Christian daily life as well as for the contemporary spiritual practice. The holistic engagement of human beings in an effort to be united with God via the act and art of choice is

³⁰¹ Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au, *The Discerning Heart: Exploring the Christian Path* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006), 47-51.

³⁰² Elizabeth Liebert, *The Way of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision Making*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008)

plausible and feasible. Moving one step further, this research acknowledges the election to be the integrating strategy for the spiritual life. When consistent endeavor to approach holistically the will of God through choice making in every dimension of human experience is made, choice can be the most integrating method for renewing and transforming the spiritual life. I call this the *discerned choice*. The collaborative and cooperative engagement between Ignatian election and contemporary scholarly works enables one to draw the main features of the discerned choice and its practical implication for contemporary Christian life, as follows.

First of all, the discerned choice is properly described as a gift from God and the work of the Holy Spirit. Even if it is enacted in human activities, the initiative is given by the grace of God. Second, the discerned choice should be considered as process, rather than a static or stagnant event. Seeking the will of God and making a choice based on the rules of the discernment can not be evaluated or legitimated by a one-time choice or a particular outcome, but by ceaseless awareness of the process from the beginning to the end. And third, even after a discerned choice is confirmed by thorough discernment or evaluation, the outcomes should be regarded as tentative. This comes from the humble acknowledgment that human efforts at discernment cannot perceive perfectly the will or desire of God. This leads us into the fourth feature, that the desired attitude of those making the discerned choice is one of humility and humbleness.

And fifth, the ultimate outcome of the discerned choice should be set exclusively toward enhancing and nourishing the love of God within one's soul. This emphasizes the fundamental disposition of indifference or spiritual freedom, since indifference can equip the discerned choice with the desire to pursue the love of God rather than mundane or physical goals. The sixth feature is related to the holistic nature of discernment, that the spiritual choice should be

confirmed by consonance with the aspects of human experience. As the will or desire of God is presupposed to be revealed in the human sphere, it can inherently be perceived in the whole arena of human experience, not just in a single faculty such as feelings or thoughts. That is, a choice motivated by one's desire embodies the integration of one's thoughts, affectivity, will, values, dignity, etc. This defines the discerned choice as the embodiment of the spiritual strategy to integrate or harmonize the divine with the whole of human life. Seventh, the discerned choice is conscious of its impact and consequent influence on the community or collective entities, since the legitimacy of the choice can be obtained within interpersonal relationships and communal consensus. The individual discerned choice is supposed to harmonize with the communal or collective voices without mutual discrepancy.

To some extent, the collective or societal implication of the discerned choice should be characterized as the communal embodiment of the consistent endeavor to discern the whole enterprise of the community or the society. By the discerned choice, the mutual reciprocity among the community may be enhanced or cultivated. This implies the integrating choice; by individual choice making, the various aspects of life can be integrated and transformed unless the choice is made out of selfish motivation and results in self-centeredness. A discerned choice can be facilitated not only to prompt the integration of a life, a community, or a society, but further also to initiate the renewal or transformation of the contemporary Christian spiritual life through the integrative discernment of God's will and desire. This is the context for the audacious claim that the discerned choice is the integrating strategy for the spiritual life.

Election and discerned choice are the ultimate manifestation of the faith and spiritually essential in the relationship with God. It is a vocational calling for a person to discern every time and place how God wants them to live their life in tune with the Spirit of God, the divine action

at work in this universe. So one's primary task is "to follow the prompting of the Spirit, who has been poured out in our hearts, to follow the way of Jesus, the way of peace, of love, of the cross."³⁰³ This is what the discerned choice is all about.

Conclusion

This chapter has endeavored to prove the centrality of the election as the ultimate aim of the Spiritual Exercises. A detailed survey of each section of the Spiritual Exercises has offered the horizontal comprehension of the election as the implicit purpose in the text. The examination of the four formative factors of the election—indifference, desire, imaginative contemplation and the rules of the discernment of spirits—has resulted in a vertical listing of the constitutive elements for an authentic election in Ignatian spirituality. One of the contributions of this research is the comprehensive exploration of the election as the primary purpose in the Spiritual Exercises. The initial characterization of the four constitutive elements of the election will be valuable to further research about the Ignatian spirituality. Those making and giving a retreat or involved in spiritual practices will enhance their practical skills for spiritual renewal or transformation through an understanding of the elements that comprise the Ignatian election. Claiming the discerned choice and elucidating the practical implication of the Ignatian election can be identified as another benefit of this research.

This chapter represents the theological reflection movement or research method in the Pastoral Circle. This examination of the centrality of election in Ignatian spirituality and the related practical concept of discerned choice sheds light upon the theological insight that the spiritual components of spiritual indifference, desire, imaginative contemplation and discernment

³⁰³ William A. Barry, "Discernment of Spirits as an Act of Faith," in *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader*, ed. George W. Traub (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 159.

of spirits should be constitutively engaged in the Christian choice making process through spiritual practice. An authentic or genuine choice which plays a critical role in integrating or synthesizing one's own spiritual life should be made with mutual cooperation or complementary and interrelated dynamics among the four constitutive components of spiritual choice; desire, indifference, imaginative contemplation, and discernment of spirits. The research methodological frame now leads into the last movement, so-called pastoral planning, which is the final step in the Pastoral Circle. This requires a thorough investigation and comprehensive survey drawing on the data described and analyzed in the first two stages of the Pastoral Circle in an effort to integrate and synthesize them with the theological reflection of the discerned choice. The primary goal of the Pastoral Circle will be actualized or embodied by suggesting the most appropriate form of a discerned choice for East Asian Christian spirituality.

Chapter 4. Discerned Choice in East Asian Christian Spirituality

Introduction

The challenges and limitations perceived in the choice-making situation and the necessity of spiritual guidelines has already been described in the introduction to this project. In brief, a man in his mid-twenties faces a vocational moment of choice as a Christian minister, but his father, who holds Confucian values, stands against him. A woman in her early thirties encounters a critical moment of life when she has to decide whether she will give birth to and raise her baby alone despite her Christian parents urging her to have an abortion. A senior pastor seriously considers leaving his church owing to conflict with some of the core members of the church. But, he is aware of his lack of a spiritual sense of when and how to execute and address this without harming the church. A severe conflict within the session of a Presbyterian church over whether a new program should be held has rocked the whole church. A mega-church makes the decision to elect one of the senior pastors' sons as his successor to the church leadership regardless of the resulting loss of credibility. These examples tell us that the existing choice pattern among East Asian Christians is not always appropriate to the context, not only because of the absence of the discipline of discernment, but also because of the overlooking of the cultural aspects of the context.

This project has made an effort to answer the following critical questions: What are the appropriate forms for and characteristics of making choices for enhancing the spiritual lives of East Asian Christians? How can East Asian cultural traits be applied in the discernment process or in a discerned choice related to Christian spirituality? In what ways can the Christian discerned choice facilitate the integration of East Asian cultural features as they relate to spiritual

life with the faith that is confessed? How can the discerned choice play a critical role in cultivating or nurturing Christian spirituality in the East Asian context?

This inquiry has engaged with three different disciplines—Sociocultural Psychology, Neo-Confucianism and Ignatian Spirituality—so as to develop the theological framework of the argument following the Pastoral Circle. As the final stage in the research method, the researcher will make an endeavor not only to integrate and synthesize the analytic insights and data gained from the above disciplines, but also to elicit the main characteristics of the discerned choice in the East Asian Christian context. First, the diverse characteristics and the intrinsic nature of the East Asian choice, as described, observed and analyzed by sociocultural psychology and Neo-Confucianism, will be recapitulated. Next, the concept of the discerned choice educed from the *Spiritual Exercises* will briefly be revisited as a function of theological insight and reflection in the Pastoral Circle method.

And third, two theoretical methods—the Experience Circle and Social Discernment Cycle—will be introduced as the theoretical foundation of the discerned choice in East Asian culture. This inquiry will depict the main features of the discerned choice in the specified cultural context, including the holistic, simultaneous, process, personal, and communal features. Following that, the theological anthropological description of the discerned choice will be briefly unfolded. Lastly, the practical implications of the discerned choice will be presented in potential or plausible areas such as the pastoral context and Christian ethical issues. The conclusion will evaluate the contributions and the limitations of the main argument concerning the discerned choice.

This theoretical endeavor to construct a new framework will be a creative and practical application of discernment in East Asian Christian spiritual formation through mutual reciprocity

between the discerned choice and East Asian cultural factors. I will ultimately argue that the discerned choice as part of spiritual formation can appropriately be embodied in the integrative and complementary dynamics between the discernment process and culturally significant characteristics.

Choice-Making for Transformation

The Choice through a Sociocultural Psychological Lens

I have investigated how the focal point of self-determination theory, which is easily observed in the Western or European context, is the importance of internalization and of self-determination. The action of the choice therefore is an articulated way to manifest internalization through self-determination in the face of external constraints. Meanwhile, the cross-cultural research methodology of socio-cultural psychology has uncovered a different mechanism in chapter one that is involved in East Asian choice-making. First, the Western self tends to facilitate choice making as a way to express oneself, since one's internal attributes outwardly define who one is. The East Asian self tends to make use of choice making to embody social attributes through actions such as fulfilling obligations that come with social roles or maintaining relationships.

Second, the values of harmony and personal responsibility to the group are stressed in the East Asian context, so the value of conformity is repeatedly emphasized to individuals. Thus, self-uniqueness is not desirable, but the willingness to integrate or to adjust one's self to the group norm is indispensable to the progress of the group. Choice making is highly likely to embody an individual's conformity to collective norms in the East Asian culture. Third, intrinsic motivation is not a primary resource for East Asian choice-making due to the interdependent

selves. For the different individual selves within the larger group of interdependent selves, choice making is perceived as providing a great chance to promote harmony and to accomplish the goal of belonging to the group.

Fourth, East Asian people tend to make choices that enhance self-effacement rather than self-esteem and self-efficacy. While self-esteem in individualistic society is rooted in better performance, Asian collective societies encourage self-effacement as a way to enhance interpersonal harmony. Fifth, within the cultural frame of reference of collectivism, East Asian choice-making tends to be a very complicated process since it represents not personal interests or goals, but in-group norms and value systems. Three steps condition the choice: first, engaging with one's own inner motivation and personal goals; second, internalizing the value systems or in-group goals; and third, pondering the effort to integrate both resources in the choice-making process. In the end, the choice procedure inevitably takes a longer time since it requires a very complicated process before action is taken.

Sixth, as interdependent selves who are striving to be interconnected with others and are determined to fit in with their social in-group, the East Asian chooser tends to rely on information and higher references (those with higher social positioning, higher authority, or figures in the in-group) from outside resources, since the self is mostly identified with the social values and norms for adjustment from an "outside-in" perspective rather than "inside-out." This reveals the strong tendency of the interdependent agent to prefer mutually determined choices or choices made for them by significant others, such as a mother for her child.

Seventh, the East Asian choice is affected by a "naive dialecticism" that is based on the three principles of change, contradiction, and relationship or holism. The choice pattern affected by naive dialecticism is as follows: First, the East Asian perceives interdependence and

interrelatedness between an object and its context, contrary to the Westerner who tends to view an object independently from its context. This results in the choice being understood as a manifestation of the relationship between context and intention. The choice is viewed not as static, but as an ongoing process. Second, naïve dialecticism allows the East Asian to accept inconsistency without difficulty when there are contradictory and opposite conditions. The choice can be regarded as a tool to discover a point of compromise among contradictory and counterpart conditions. This makes it possible for East Asians to tolerate contradictory choices before and after the action of making a choice. That is, even if the present choice is totally opposite to the previous choice, it is acceptable to change and make a new choice. This enables us to speculate that a process of way to achieve mutually agreeable or interdependent choices is highly likely to be embodied through a process of naïve dialecticism since it would take into consideration of the mutual aspects taking a back and forth procedure between one's own motivation and inner resources, and external or higher resources of in-group. It is an East Asian way to make balance or to approach compromising between two or more options, like the same dynamics between yin and yang.

The Choice in the Neo-Confucian Context

I will recapitulate the main features of Neo-Confucianism and its religious and spiritual features, which have had an immense influence upon the formulation of the inner mechanism of the choice pattern in the East Asian cultural context according to sociocultural/psychological research in chapter two. This research presupposes that no other ideologies or religions besides Neo-Confucianism have had such a comprehensive and profound influence upon the life patterns, interpersonal interactions, cultural and value systems, and worldview in the history of

the East Asian countries. In addition, the concepts of self-cultivation and sagehood in the writings of Zhu Xi are the culmination of Neo-Confucianism and have permeated the cosmology, anthropocosmic worldview, human nature and mind, educational agenda, spiritual practices, society, and nation. These teachings are still currently shaping the core understanding of the self, nature, cosmos, mind, and learning in East Asia. Via an exploration of the Neo-Confucian concept of the self-cultivation and sagehood, I examined the essential components of the Confucian ideology and philosophy. This summary will assist us in understanding how the implicit and intrinsic mechanism of choices made by East Asians is distinctive or different from choices made by those in the Western world.

First, Zhu Xi's cosmology uncovers the dialectical and paradoxical aspect of the philosophy based on dualistic entities and the dynamic between yin and yang, manifested and unmanifested, rising and falling, and motion and rest. Following the core teaching of the *Book of Changes*, which says, "the alternation of yin and yang makes up the Tao," Zhu Xi notes that all creatures in the universe are the manifestation of the dualistic alternation. Zhu Xi also articulates that the metaphysical characteristics of the Great Ultimate are paradoxical and dialectical as well as infinite and eternal. The principle of the Great Ultimate guides us in the process of change in cosmic and human nature, which is understood as a growth process rather than as a static or substantial self-nature. In the ontological sphere, it suggests that no being in the cosmos is static with an accomplished form. Being is viewed as process and change; all being is not-yet-finally-formed. The cognitive dimension in the dialectic world does not make an effort to discover a finite fact nor to consider it as truth; instead, Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism pursues a balance among the dualistic or different aspects of the world toward interior harmony. It turns out that the cultural psychological concept of naïve dialecticism is grounded fundamentally in Neo-

Confucian understanding of Cosmos and Nature and its dualistic alternation of yin and yang.

Second, the Neo-Confucian idea of humanity as “anthropocosmic” is essential since it means that human nature not only is endowed with the initiatives of the cosmic dynamics but also can participate in the creative work of heaven and earth. Human beings are intrinsically related to heaven, earth, and the myriad things. As the sons and daughters of heaven and earth, humanity is the embodiment of that which is most refined in the creative process of the universe. This intrinsically indicates that the human being is holistic in that as the son or daughter of heaven and earth, humanity is the embodiment of that which is most refined in the creative process of the universe. This ontological interrelation and interdependence, moreover, is predicated on the cosmology of “great harmony” among heaven, earth, humans, and things.

Third, despite the infinite possibility of human nature, the human being is still struggling with the dualistic disposition of the mind. Zhu Xi refers to the mind of the Way and the human mind; the former is endowed by the cosmic initiatives, while the later can be tarnished and made capricious by emotions and desire. Here is where spiritual practices and methods for self-cultivation should be located. Through reverence, quiet-sitting, meditation, and investigation of things through extensive knowledge, the human mind can regain equilibrium and harmony in relation to heaven, earth, and the myriad things. Thus, human nature embodies the heavenly principle within, but it becomes a constitutive component of the creative works of the cosmos, or the anthropocosmic being. Every individual—including its being, activity, knowledge, mind, and emotion—is meaningful due to its embodiment of the cosmic workings. All aspects of the human being have the potential to manifest the cosmic truth and therefore the holistic aspect of life. As a result, the intrapersonal, interpersonal, societal, communal, and cosmic dimensions in Neo-Confucianism are remarkably conspicuous in the vision of sagehood and in the methodology of

self-cultivation. This is the holistic as well as contextual dimension of Neo-Confucianism.

Fourth, deliberately developed from the holistic aspect, Zhu Xi's spirituality has interdependent and interconnected characteristics. Related to the dialectical nature of being, the existence of any one entity cannot be presupposed without the existence of any other; this firmly presupposes the mutual dependence and connection with each other. Human nature, as an anthropocosmic being, is premised on the interdependent and interconnected relationship among heaven, earth, and human beings. Since all things and beings are interconnected, a Confucian seeker would never engage him/herself carelessly or negligently, but would with reverence investigate things, making an effort to discover the hidden principles endowed in all things as the way for cultivating and further transforming him/herself. The person is significantly realized in the interdependence and interconnectedness of life so that positioning oneself, one's thought, one's feelings and one's actions in the way of harmony and equilibrium is the most critical task for self-cultivation and sagehood.

Encountering the Discerned Choice

What kinds of change or transformation would be expected to take place when a Christian from the East Asian cultural context engages in a spiritual retreat and spiritual direction? What would be the desirable fruits or expected outcomes in this situation? In what ways might the spiritual directors or those giving the retreat take more consideration of the cultural features of the directee or the retreatant? And what are the spiritual insights of the spiritual retreat and spiritual direction that might challenge the current spiritual formation of the directee and the retreatant, and how could this lead to new formation?

In this regard, it is appropriate to assume that the Christian coming into a retreat and

spiritual direction context is concerned with cultural experiences, cognitive frameworks, and affective disposition (lived experiences). Thus, a spiritual retreat can offer the retreatant the framework of the discerned choice in all its dimensions: desire, contemplative imagination, spiritual freedom, and discernment of spirits. First, indifference will reorient the life and human order into the way God is originally intending for the retreatant and directee, since it gives them the interior prerequisites or fundamental disposition of human beings. It readies them to follow the way of Jesus even if it leads them in a direction he or she did not intend. This state of equilibrium and spiritual freedom creates the state of the middle or the point of a balance so that it can lead to wherever the Holy Spirit would guide and lead, not where the human order would lead.

Second, one of the most significant outcomes of participating in a spiritual retreat and spiritual direction is the change in the desire of the practitioner. The desire by the human order is meant to be challenged and is required to cultivate and elicit the great desire, which is originally given in the human nature, based upon the *imago dei*. The *Exercises* are devised to lead the retreatant to notice that selfish, impulsive, or physical desire is gradually placated, and the great desire sprouts forth as the main motivation of the soul. Therefore, the retreatant fosters the spiritual and great desire within the soul sufficiently to desire what God desires, and further to make a choice in alignment with what God does for the soul. Imaginative contemplation plays a critical role in mediating human experiences with the sacred and transcendent being, thus intensifying the spiritual and intimate relationship with God and Jesus Christ. This special human capacity enables the current situation to be “present” to the retreatant, and these experiences ask them to strengthen their desire to make a choice for the great desire.

The primary purpose of discernment of spirits originates in the Ignatian conviction that

imaginative contemplation stirs the affections and feelings and inner desire of the retreatant and aids in examining and discriminating the inner motions. The deliberate evaluation and thorough discernment in the middle of the fluctuating dynamics between consolation and desolation not only identify the tactics of the evil spirit, but also perceive the genuine touches of the good and Holy Spirit. Therefore, this procedure helps retreatant to make a better choice in a particular situation and time.

These new inputs or spiritual disciplines related the discerned choice not only cultivate retreatant' spiritual formation, but they also challenge them to change their existing lifestyles or to stop distorted choice patterns. The primary purpose of this intrinsic procedure in the retreat or direction, either challenging or transforming the choice pattern, is to be utilized to integrate their whole experiences with their seeking for the will of God in their lived lives. It is worthwhile to note, however, that when the Christian choice-maker clings excessively to the cultural context without the framework described above, it is necessary to be conscious or careful, since this could hamper the choice-maker from taking a creative or productive approach to making a decision or choice and could also weaken the spiritual growth or transformation. It is helpful for this argument to recapitulate the main features embedded in choice-making within East Asian culture: dialectical, interdependent, balanced, harmonious, interrelated, interconnected, reciprocal, collectivistic, mutual, etc.

In the example of Sung-dong, his interdependent relationship with his father has delayed his vocational decision or choice since the father believes Sung-dong should follow Confucian values, even though this disregards his son's own spiritual experiences and vocational calling. Eun-ji was urged by her Christian parents to make a decision to abort her baby because they were concerned about their daughter's future life and health, at least on the surface. Other than

that, there is, however, the implicit reason that the parents were also concerned about the possibility that their social standing could be eroded in the society or community owing to their daughter. A communal choice by a mega-church intends to stimulate the sense of collectivism and consolidate their community by choosing the son of the senior pastor as his successor.

Here are realistic examples of possible challenges and changes where the East Asian encounters the framework of the discerned choice via the retreat and spiritual direction.

1. It is refreshing to realize that the choice should be made by and for oneself, not be forced upon one by someone else who has greater authority, social standing, or power. The spiritual practitioners in the East Asian Christian context realize that “I” am the person to make the choice and to be responsible for its consequences. In the spiritual retreat or direction session, they can be invited to imagine Jesus as their ultimate ally and companion, who will stand for their choice in spiritual journey. The biblical theme of “beloved son” or “imago dei” can be effective to affirm the spiritual solidarity of Holy Spirit with them. Even though they execute critical choice or decision for themselves, it is not made by themselves, but from the intimate relationship with God. However its authenticity does not lead to the point that the East Asian directees are asked to flee from or disregard the context of collectivism: rather individualistic stance is constructively employed as complementary component.

2. The choice is not used to embody social attributes or expectations, but as a tool to discern the divine will and the meaning of one’s life or vocation and that of the faith community.

3. The East Asian is invited to recognize the choice as conformity not to the social norms, but to God’s will and plans for the choice-maker’s life. That is, while the choice was activated previously by the “outside-in” dynamics, the discerned choice for the East Asian Christian is likely to activate the “inside-out” formulation so that it results in cultivating the inner

or spiritual engagement and discipline to discover the life values within oneself.

4. The retreatant or directee will acknowledge that the choice should be regarded as an appropriate instrument for expressing one's uniqueness, how one is qualitatively different from other people and their lives. This is the critical locus where the sense of vocation is cultivated within one's inner awareness that God endows this uniqueness or difference. In collectivism and interdependent selves, seeking for one's uniqueness or vocation could be seen as counter-cultural or counter-contextual since the normative values or significant other's opinion is likely somewhat dismissed. The other way around, the normative values or the expectation of significant other, father in Sung-dong's case for instance, have played crucial role in subduing individual values or one's inner motivation or resources. It must be admitted therefore that extreme application of discerned choice could lead one to go against social normative values or their interpersonal expectation. It is not appropriate form per se. The discerned choice should pursue wise and fruitful outcomes integrating and embracing cultural components as constitutive. Furthermore, it is legitimate to say that the discerned choice is so contextual-oriented concept. So, it tends to emphasize more on cultivating the individualism and independent selves in East Asian context; vise versa, the discerned choice in European or American context should focus on nurturing and cultivating collectivistic frame and interdependent selves system as integrating or complementary way.

5. The choice then facilitates the enhancing of the self-esteem or self-confidence, since it could not be made out of self-effacement. The East Asian makes the choice out of his or her sense of self-esteem and self-confidence, and this in turn cultivates and nurtures them.

6. The guidance to discern the inner prompts of the Holy Spirit keeps them from relying too much upon higher references such as people who are higher in authority, standing, or power.

7. The new desire tends to be initiated and elicited mainly in the intrapersonal area by discovering deeply the inner prompts or motions of the Holy Spirit.

8. The indifference or spiritual freedom has a high likelihood of being discovered in the intrapersonal or social level by loosening the strong connection between oneself and social expectations, tradition, custom, norms, etc.

9. A growing sense of the imaginative contemplation enhances the deep and private sense of the personal relationship with Jesus and God.

10. The discernment of spirits has the tendency to focus on discriminating whether a desire is either from God or from social expectations. In the vocational choice, the retreatant and directee is strongly invited to discern the inner voice or calling within his or her spirit and soul, encouraged not to rely upon outside resources or voices.

I have explored the several ways in which East Asian Christian choice-making may potentially be changed or transformed by the spiritual practices. Although it is still meaningful in cultivating the spiritual life, the discerned choice is needed as well for enhancing or transforming the retreatant's spiritual formation. This project will therefore endeavor to present the critical features of the discerned choice in the East Asian context as a strategy for integrating or synthesizing Christian spirituality.³⁰⁴

Two Methods for the Discerned Choice

This project sets the significant premise that making the Christian choice in the East Asian context appropriate requires establishing two theoretical methods as its foundations: "Experience Circle" and "Social Discernment Cycle." The former delineates the holistic and

³⁰⁴ This will be unfolded partially within the specific cultural context, but it can also be applicable into multi-cultural context where several cultural features co-exist.

simultaneous characteristic of the human experiences, and the latter elucidates the appropriateness of the spiritual discernment is unveiled as taking cyclical process following certain procedure.

Experience Circle

The Experience Circle (see Figure 2) was devised by several Christian spirituality scholars at San Francisco Theological Seminary, including Elizabeth Liebert and Andrew Dreitcer, based upon their professional awareness that they needed certain theoretical tools to elucidate the holistic or simultaneous features of spiritual discernment. Two-consensus consciousness has been perceived and shared among scholar as they have attempted to interpret and appropriate discernment in the postmodern context. First, the traditional or existing theoretical frameworks for discernment have a tendency to focus primarily on the intrapersonal and interpersonal level, which is insufficient for making all aspects of all human experiences relevant. Second, the premise of the discernment that God is present in all creation is presupposed to discern the will of God in the social level and in nature.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁵ The theoretical construction between social consciousness and natural theology has been contributed by prominent scholars such as Sallie McFague, *Super, Natural Christians: How We Should Love Nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997); Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium*, 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1998).

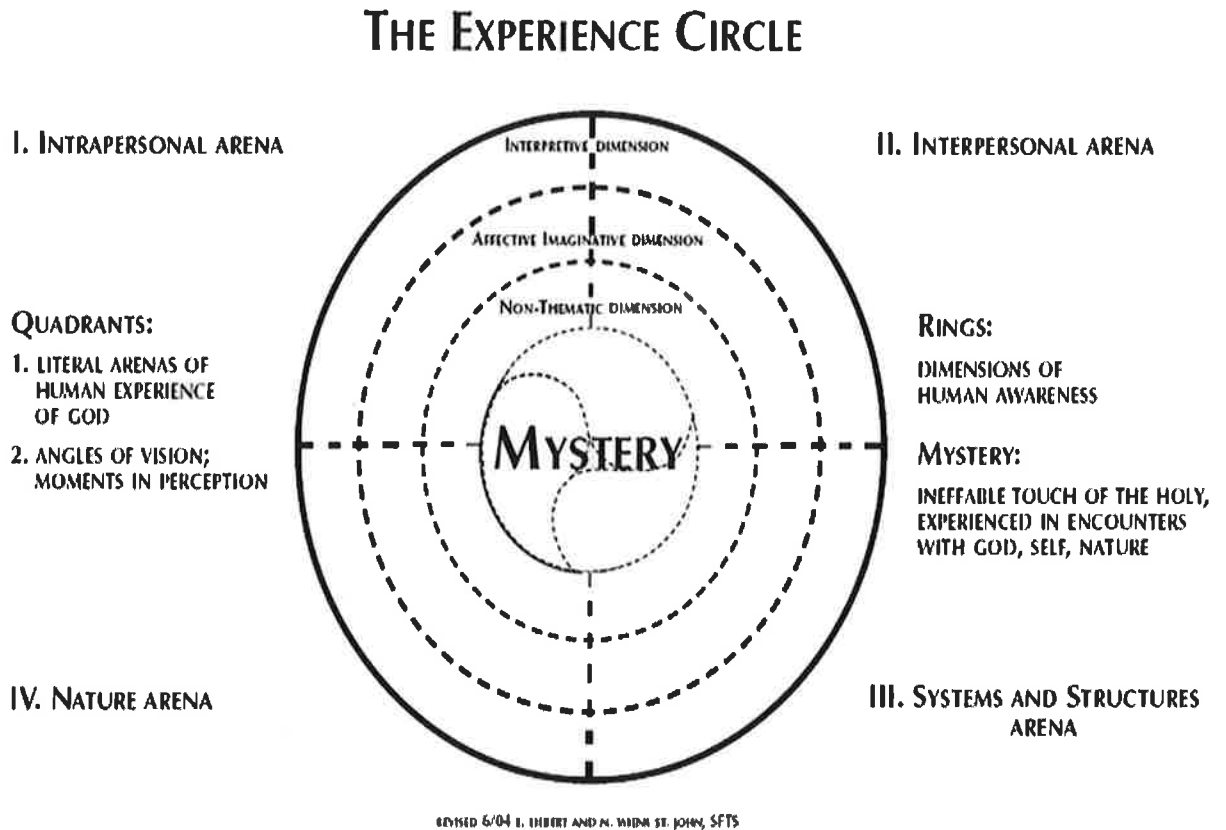


Figure 2. The Experience Circle³⁰⁶

The diagram of the Experience Circle consists of four concentric circles and areas within the circle, in which two different notions are described simultaneously. The four concentric circles portray the four different perceptions of experience, which are mystery, the non-thematic dimension, the affective-imaginative dimension, and the interpretive dimension. The quadrants are occupied by the four arenas of human experience: intrapersonal, interpersonal, systems and structures, and nature.

At the center of the diagram is mystery. The three curving, dashed lines represent the Trinitarian interactions of God, self, and nature in the center circle. Distinctive is that the line

³⁰⁶ Elizabeth Lieberts, "Introduction to Christian Discernment" (San Anselmo: San Francisco Theological Seminary, class presentation, January 12, 2010)

within the circle is dashed. This represents the tension and incomprehensible dynamics involved in the intermingling with each other in the same way that the Trinity exists. The upper left arena is referred to as the intrapersonal, the upper right as interpersonal, the lower right as systems and structures, and the below left arena as nature. Each arena is again divided by dashed lines, indicating that they are neither hard-and-fast realities, nor are they to be understood as clear and distinct. It is also to be presumed that the body can be understood as present in all arenas, but in different ways. In addition, there are three concentric rings around the mystery, representing the multiple layers of the human experience. Each dimension requires us to observe, perceive, or discern at different conscious and unconscious levels of human awareness.

The circle named the non-thematic dimension encircles the center ring of mystery. The affective-imaginative dimension encircles that, and the interpretative dimension surrounds the former circle with a dashed line. This is a guide to the order of discernment, indicating an inside-to-outside movement. First, the non-thematic dimension is always present under both the affective-imaginative and interpretive dimensions. And the affective-imaginative dimension is present under the interpretive dimension. The interpretative dimension requires noticing the influence of thoughts, theological understanding, concepts, and assumptions and how they shape one's cognitive dimension. Next, in the affective-imaginative dimension one is asked to notice the emotional dynamics and affective movement. The careful observation of the desire and its effect on one's spiritual dimension is the main task. In the non-thematic dimension, one is invited to figure out the bodily or intuitive experience, which is mainly represented by images and metaphors, or sometimes by dreams.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁷ This research is aware that the Experience Circle is devised only within North American Christian scholarly group so it might contain explicitly lived experiences or theological reflection from Western Christian context. The interpersonal response or social reaction could more conspicuously be perceived in East Asian Christian context.

What are the main features of the experience circle that are addressed?³⁰⁸ First of all, it illustrates the interrelatedness or interconnection of each dimension with the others. It explicitly implies that any single experience does not happen just in a single dimension. An experience affects all the dimensions. Secondly, the data collected from each dimension become collaborative engagement with the discovery of the human experience. Even if a single piece of data from a dimension could be fragmented or isolated in an experience, once it joins the collaborative work with the other dimensions, it becomes a constitutive component of the whole diagram of experience. This leads us thus into the third feature, that human experience is not partial or isolated, but holistic and simultaneous. These attributes contribute to identifying the dimensions and arenas that discernment can engage.

What are the implications of the arenas and dimensions for discernment? First, if God meets us in all arenas of human experience, there must be ways to assess the will of God and discriminate the good impulse from the bad in each of these arenas. Second, the diagram helps us to recognize how God is at work with us simultaneously and spontaneously in the different arenas, reminding us to employ a multifaceted and holistic perception in every dimension. Third, it guides us not to fall into the easy mistake of discerning exclusively in one dimension, neglecting the other three dimensions. Fourth, this diagram of the Experience Circle helps us to articulate and conceptualize the pre-conceptual, intuitive discernment, which is performed in the non-thematic dimension, so that we can foster the assessment skills of discernment in the multidimensional arenas.

In light of the above, we can articulate the way in which we would apply the Experience Circle to practicing discernment. First, the Mystery centered in the diagram is clearly set forth as

³⁰⁸ More details in Liebert's article, "Supervision as Widening the Horizons," in *Supervision of Spiritual Directors: Engaging in Holy Mystery*, ed. Mary Rose Bumpus and Rebecca Langer, pp. 125-45.

the source and goal of all discernment, reflecting two crucial aspects of discernment. On the one hand, discernment must be grounded in the divine initiative, which means that the inner dynamics or mechanism of Mystery remains incomprehensible and inexplicable. On the other hand, the self and nature are participating in Mystery by divine grace, which suggests that the divine will is partially still unknown to the human. This creates an enduring tension and ambiguity in human perception. The emphasis is not on human inability or incapacity, but on the divine freedom transcendent of human nature.

Next, we are invited to engage in an intuition-based discernment process in the non-thematic dimension where we are supposed to read something that is resonating underneath the affective elements. According to the Ignatian framework, the rules of Discernment of spirits belong to this dimension. And finally, most of the inner motions perceived or discovered, such as memories, images, dreams, and feeling-based processes, become the major sources of discernment in the affective-imaginative dimension. Here we are encouraged to discern the distinctive feelings that are aroused by the memories and images and are sometimes evoked by smells, sounds, and tastes. As I discussed in the Spiritual Exercises context (chapter 3), spiritual practitioners are guided to meditate on the biblical accounts of the life of Jesus, his passion, crucifixion, and resurrection. Genuine contemplative meditation or imaginative contemplation prompts immediately the inner motions of the practitioners, especially the affective-imaginative dimension, so as to become the sources of the discernment. In addition, the *Examen* prayer in the Ignatian context involves the same dynamics.³⁰⁹

And lastly, the interpretive dimension indicates that the reasoning-oriented process is necessary in discernment. Especially when the discernor is at the point of intentional reflection

³⁰⁹ Ignatius and George E. Ganss, *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), nos. 32-43.

and choice-making, the reasoning process and rational capacity play a substantial role in the discernment process. In the second rules of discernment, to achieve a more deliberate and delicate process, Ignatius of Loyola urges discerners to take advantage of their reasoning capacity to discern the direction the will of God is moving.³¹⁰

Based on the above exploration, the Experience Circle is considered the appropriate instrument for revealing the simultaneous and holistic nature of discernment as well as the multidimensional and multifaceted experiences of the human being in the contemporary world. The next section will investigate the Social Discernment Cycle, the other foundational pillar of the discerned choice, besides the Experience Circle.

Social Discernment Cycle

Elizabeth Liebert, Andrew Dreitcer, and their colleagues collaboratively devised the Social Discernment Circle, employing the Pastoral Circle model in modified form for the Christian spiritual discernment process on the social or collective level. There is shared awareness in academic circles that the existing spiritual discernment tools of the Christian tradition have the tendency to focus on discernment on the individual or personal level. The necessity of a discernment tool that includes the arenas of society and nature has been growing as the world has changed.

Foundations of the Social Discernment Cycle

Before investigating the building blocks of the Social Discernment Cycle (SDC), this section addresses the theological foundation of social discernment, which is grounded in the

³¹⁰ Ibid., no. 333.

liberation theological view.³¹¹ The Judeo-Christian tradition confesses that God has revealed Godself as grace in history and active in place and time. This God is the One who hears the cries of the oppressed people, accompanies them on a journey of liberation, establishes them as a nation, and restores them in loving forgiveness. This God is the Jesus who, born of a woman, grew up in normal village life, was baptized in the River Jordan, preached good news to the poor, gathered a community of companions, bore persecution by the systemic powers, and experienced new types of life in the fullness of the resurrection. The God revealed graciously in history works always within the social and community context. This grace of the divine revelation calls human beings to discern the signs embodied in the social context, as well as those actualized in personal salvation. Discernment practiced with a social foundation, a social purpose, and a social consequence becomes a way of sharing in God's action in history.

It is a very deliberate and sophisticated process to discern the signs in the social context, and thus it requires several preliminary but essential requirements and presuppositions that are the building blocks for social discernment.³¹² Liebert and her colleagues devised the seven building blocks for the discernment and decision-making strategies by reformulating the Election practice in the Spiritual Exercises, composed by Ignatius of Loyola, for contemporary application.³¹³ First and foremost is the seeking of spiritual freedom or indifference, the process by which discernment is created and nurtured. Certain aspects of the inner disposition are ready to move in any direction to achieve the so-called equilibrium status. The choice and decision-

³¹¹ Peter Henriot, "Introduction: Roots of the Pastoral Circle in Personal Experiences and Catholic Social Tradition," in *The Pastoral Circle Revisited: A Critical Quest for Truth and Transformation*, ed. Frans Wijzen, Peter Henriot, and Rodrigo Mejia (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 2005), 5–6.

³¹² Elizabeth Liebert, "Discernment for Our Times: A Practice with Postmodern Implications," *Studies in Spirituality* 18 (2008), 345.

³¹³ *Spiritual Exercises*, nos. 169–189.

making framed by discernment requires discovering and focusing on the available options. Paying attention to the available options enables the discerner to discriminate or set aside the unavailable or unrealistic ones. This enables the discerner to proceed to the third movement, gathering and evaluating appropriate data relevant to these options.

Given the relevant data, one is asked at the fourth step to pray for the best decision and choice in the light of faith. Next, one can formulate a tentative decision through an appropriate process. At this fifth step, any type of discernment methods in the Christian tradition, such as Ignatian spirituality or the clearness committee of Quakers, can be facilitated in the light of faith, leading to an awareness of how God is calling the discerner to take a certain action or to make a decision or choice in a concrete circumstance. Then, in the sixth step the decision-maker seeks confirmation that this decision or choice is the divine calling in this situation or context. The seventh and last step leads the discerner to finalize the decision or choice by actualizing it into specific action and by assessing its provisional results.

Liebert puts forth several points for making the discernment genuine or fruitful.³¹⁴ Most importantly, these steps should not be followed rigidly. The prayer for spiritual freedom should be taking place as frequently as possible; the options gathered can also be changed or shifted as the procedure goes into the discernment. In addition, confirmation may not be immediate, and sometimes the procedure takes another round without finalizing the decision and choice by discernment. Notably, the strategy of discernment is not one-time life event. It can be used whenever a person faces a decision and choice-making moment. Preferably, it is necessary to expand discernment into a life-long way of life, beyond a simple process of a single decision-making. This preliminary argument relates to the comprehensive implications of discernment and choice in the spiritual life and spiritual formation. Now I will explore the structure of the Social

³¹⁴ Liebert, "Discernment for Our Times," 345.

Discernment Cycle itself.

Five-Fold Structure

Grounded in the pastoral circle, the Social Discernment Cycle has the nature of a spiral or cyclical process with five phases: Focus for Discernment; Current Situation; Social Analysis; Prayer and Theological Reflection; and Contemplative Response (see Figure 3). Simply put, the first phase contours the scope and contents of the actual discernment, and the remaining four phases follow the dynamic of the pastoral circle: insertion/description, analysis, theological reflection, and pastoral action/decision. It is remarkable that by following the basic structure of the Pastoral Circle, the structural procedure of the SDC is complementary to and supplements well the seven building blocks that are the essential elements for the discernment practice in the decision/choice-making process.

Based upon the Ignatian tradition,³¹⁵ spiritual freedom or indifference is regarded as the indispensable disposition of the discernor at the first phases as well as throughout the whole process. Liebert maintains, according to her experience, that considering the complexities of social discernment and the difficulties in staying open to God's call, the discernor should engage frequently and consciously in prayer for spiritual freedom. By doing so, the discernor clarifies the subject and topic of the discernment, which is the first assignment in the cycle. The clarification of the subject and topic may also, however, be obtained through consistent effort to discover and focus on the options for discernment, as the second building block suggests.

³¹⁵ *Spiritual Exercises*, no. 23.

SOCIAL DISCERNMENT CYCLE

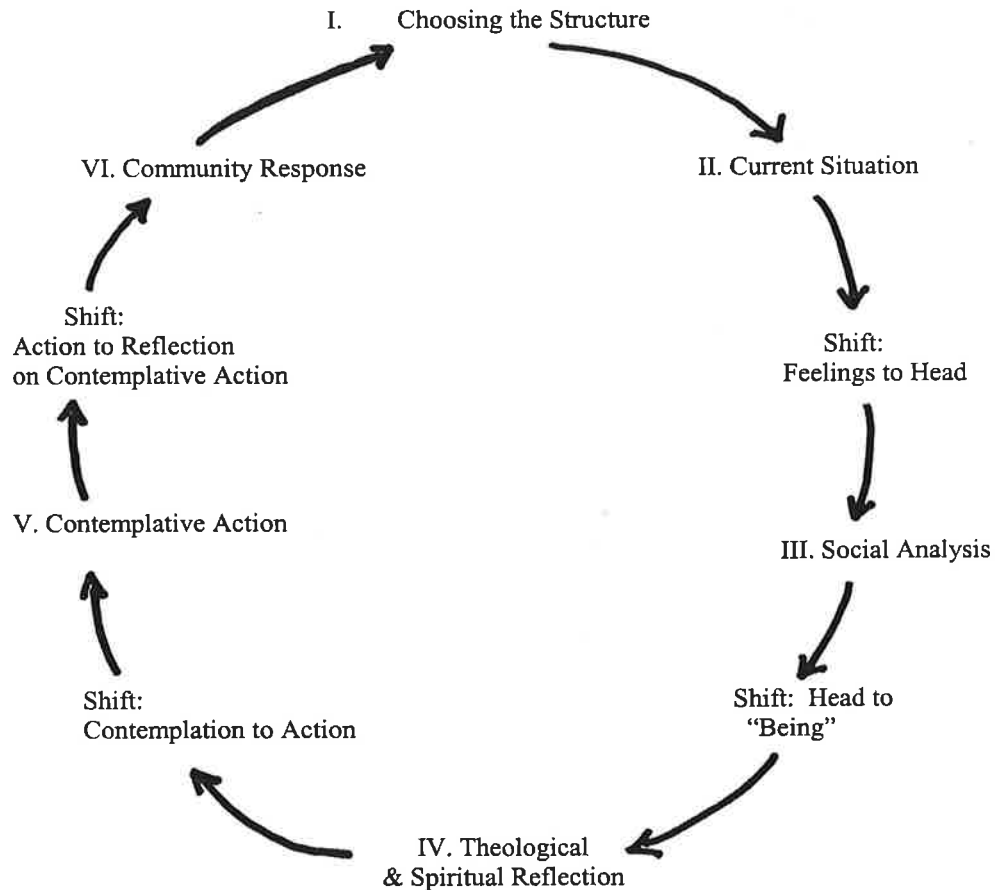


Figure 3. The Social Discernment Cycle³¹⁶

The second phase, Current Situation, is essentially connected with the first-hand experiences of the discerner, since second-hand information and data are relied upon very little as discernment sources. What is the experience of the discerner in the structure or context right now, and how is the discerner responding physically, cognitively, affectively, and spiritually to

³¹⁶ Elizabeth Liebert, "Social Discernment Cycle" (San Anselmo: San Francisco Theological Seminary, class presentation, January 14, 2010).

the current situation? This technically requires the subtle awareness that the discerner should distance him or herself from direct involvement in the structure. Nevertheless, Liebert remarks on the self-implication of the discernment, that is, first-hand data from direct experiences within the context is of the utmost importance for a genuine discernment process. Once the discerner has found spiritual freedom, the description of the current situation in the process becomes a reliable resource for the next phases. Herein, the descriptive data is gathered in two ways based on the situation and experiences: the discerner's description of what is going on and of how the discerner is responding to it.

Full-scale data gathering is done in the third phase, Social Analysis. Here the discerner discovers the vertical and horizontal landscape of the context not only by identifying the history, mission, traditions, and cultures, but also by describing cultural or systemic assumptions embedded in the structures, the social relationships and the flow of the power. The analysis is designed to shed light upon the implicit or intrinsic connection or linkages of roles, relationships, interests, and forces that actually constitute the structure or system. Once these hidden connections or linkages are unveiled, what has been inaccessible or unobservable is revealed as the most vulnerable features. Here the calling of the discerner to do social discernment is discovered. It is a common challenge that the practitioner expresses discouragement when they face the complexity and resistance of the deeply embedded system and structure. In this phase, consistent and critical analysis as part of the prayer discipline and as spiritual practice is required.

Liebert asserts that the distinctive strength of the SDC is the fact that, contrary to an analysis held from the outside, SDC actively invites the analysis into the heart of the process so that it may be regarded as one's calling within the structure. On the other hand, as complex as the

social structure and its dynamics are, the analysis requires sophisticated instruments. This is why various forms of analysis are helpful in shedding light upon the complexities and interlocking connections in the structure. For instance, if the social maladjustment of Korean immigrants in the United State is a discernment topic, the analysis can be fruitful if it is harnessed collaboratively not only with the sociological approach, but also with economic and cultural disciplines.

The next shift occurs in moving to phase four, Prayer and Theological Reflection. Here is the intentional and deliberate emphasis on contemplative prayer for achieving spiritual freedom, since the discerner is invited to wait for the initiative of God. In contrast to using theological truth and Scripture to legitimate one's discernment, the inner disposition of "indifference" prepares one to accept the biblical and theological insights as divine initiatives. This step leads the discerner into the insights based on Scripture or theological truth, which become the significant bedrock for discerning freedom in a distorted structure. Next, the discerner names several features of what is graced and sinful in the structure and explores glimpses of the potential transformation. It is crucial to note that the object of the transformation via the discernment is the discerner as well as the structure. Even if the discernment sets the aim of changing and restoring the distorted or sinful nature of the system and structure, the authentic process of the SDC process brings about the transformation of the discerner, who is changed through a different view, understanding, and attitude toward the structure, him or herself, and God.

I verified this transformation of the discerner as true and authentic by my own first-hand experience of the SDC process. When I took the class with Liebert, the initially unexpected but in the end sweet grace allowed me to experience a transformation and change of my perspective

and attitude toward myself and God as well as the structure I had chosen, a Korean immigrant church I was involved with.

Now we arrive at the final and fifth phase, Contemplative Response. The discerner notices that several possible concrete responses emerge and is guided to make a decision or choice about which response is appropriate to the context. Again, the spiritual freedom in this process plays a critical role. A response or reaction that enhances spiritual freedom could be considered as a potential outcome, but any choice that reduces or decreases spiritual freedom will be disregarded. In addition, naming the people being involved in carrying out the action, noticing how the potential or tentative action will affect the marginalized, and observing how power functions and its dynamics shift are the task of this step. Then, the evaluation of the tentative decision and how it might be executed in the context is conducted. This is not intended to finalize the discernment, but to endeavor to find ways to implement the decision and to reach confirmation.

What would confirmation of discernment of a social system, institution, and structure look like? Borrowing from Donal Dorr and Walter Wink, Liebert enumerates nine desirable fruits of the discernment process: “greater unity without artificial uniformity; security and sense of safety of all participants in the system; growth in justice; meaningful work; sustainable progress; meaningful relationships; connection to one’s cultural roots; enhanced shalom/harmony; growing hopefulness, and greater inclusivity.”³¹⁷ When these fruits unfold in the tentative outcomes, the discernment is confirmed.

³¹⁷ Liebert, "Discernment for Our Times," 351. This originated in Donal Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984) and Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York: Doubleday, 1998).

The Discerned Choice in East Asian Christian Spirituality

The two frameworks and methodologies for making the discerned choice offer an all-embracing view of the human experience and the structural process. Now, I will propose the framework for the discerned choice that is appropriate for integrating and cultivating spiritual formation in the East Asian context. This integrating strategy for East Asian Christian spiritual formation is not just focused upon solving the problems of the East Asian Christian choice pattern, but it also suggests the strategy for integrating and synthesizing East Asians' Christian spiritual formation within the lived experiences of the choice.

Discerned Choice as Holistic

In her book, *The Way of Discernment*, Elizabeth Liebert presents several essential tactics for making a genuine discernment, ranging from memory, intuition, body, and imagination to reason, affection, and nature.³¹⁸ She suggests that seeking God's will or desire in the midst of decision and choice should be embodied by the unceasing endeavor to engage human experiences everywhere and all the time. Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au also assert that, following the Ignatian tradition, the discernment should integrate the all-embracing utilization of the human faculties of thought, affectivity, imagination, and sensation in all the self's aspects: the mind, the heart, the genitals, and the spiritual sensitivities.³¹⁹

The profound awareness of the holistic dimension of human experience found in the Experience Circle harnesses the concept of the holistic discerned choice with structural and systemic frameworks. First, the Circle implies that the discerned choice should be engaged

³¹⁸ Elizabeth Liebert, *The Way of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision Making*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008).

³¹⁹ Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au, *The Discerning Heart: Exploring the Christian Path* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006), 48.

within the three-fold awareness dimensions: cognitive-interpretive, affective-imaginative, and non-thematic. The will or desire of God toward a human life is perceivable within the whole dimension of human awareness. The discerned choice therefore commits to collect the data in the different dimensions and the collected data are considered primarily as collaborative and mutual, not as in conflict or tension. Second, the discerned choice requires a comprehensive investigation or examination in the four arenas: intrapersonal, interpersonal, social or systemic, and nature. Because no single experience happens in just a single dimension, the discernment practice and its following choice should include all-embracing consideration within the whole human dimension. Thus, the data collected by discerning engagement in each dimension become collaborative, cooperative, and reciprocal in discovering the will and desire of God here and now.

The third feature is related to the fact that the center of the circle consists in the holy mystery in which the God, self, and nature take part mutually, reciprocally, and holistically. In spite of the mystery existing beyond human capacity, it opens the possibility for the divine will to be revealed and uncovered by human nature, one of the constitutive partners of the Mystery. And finally, the discerned choice educed from the Ignatian tradition is characterized by four constitutive spiritual components: desire, indifference, contemplation, and discernment of spirits. This is significant because it presumes the holistic awareness or examination within the comprehensive dimension of all experiences.

I have examined the characteristic tendency of East Asian choice-making to be mainly formulated or motivated by interdependent or collective dynamics based upon the dialectical understanding of the world. This means the choice exclusively made in interdependent selves or collectivism are likely to be insufficient based upon biased data or viewpoint in the light of the desired outcomes of discerned choice. The holistic discerned choice implies that the

comprehensive or inclusive perception of the hidden will of God should be held not just in the interpersonal or social arenas, but the intrapersonal and nature levels must also be considered as essential elements in discerning the divine will. Then the choice made by discerning holistically can incarnate comprehensible or perceptible aspects of the Mystery, which is the will and desire of God.

Considering the discerned choice as holistic awakens in an active sense East Asian Christians to use all their human capacity to search for the trace of Spirit's leadings so as to make the choice based upon an all-dimensional investigation and examination, rather than being biased or prejudiced by a single or narrow perception. This prevents the choice process from being affected by one area over the others. If one's choice-making was influenced by people with higher authority, standing, or powers through taking excessive consideration of social positions or relationships, then the discerned choice would not be made after a thorough examination of all the areas where the divine will could be discerned.

The discerned choice formula requires facilitating the four constitutive components within the whole area of human experience. It invites the choice-maker to engage in imaginative contemplation and to conform his life standing before the critical choice in the light of Jesus and his or her relationship with Jesus. The inner motion or a new desire is prompted and moved in areas that had been previously disregarded or dismissed. This is the critical source for the discernment of the Spirit. Once the consolation from the good or Holy Spirit is discerned, the choice moves to the confirmation process through the stance of indifference or spiritual freedom. That is, if the whole process of holistic discernment is guaranteed by spiritual freedom, the discerned choice can move into the confirmation steps.

A practical question possibly comes to the surface: What if a discrepancy or conflicts

between two arenas are perceived? What is the standard for prioritizing one over the other? The desirable fruit of the discerned choice in the holistic framework would be an appreciation of the value of “prudence,” not rushing to analyze it as a problematic or opposite, but attempting to view it carefully with indifference or spiritual freedom. This should enable the practitioner to see the situation from an objective or third-person perspective, which could offer wisdom or insights.

For East Asian Christians, an approach within the Neo-Confucian framework of the dialectic nature of being is appropriate. This assumes that all beings and realities are not static, but that there is a dynamic between coming and going, ebbing and flowing, light and dark, etc. This perspective helps the discerners avoid trying to figure out which is the good and which is the bad at this point. But, staying in spiritual freedom, he or she is encouraged to be deeply aware of the flows of the divine desire around the issue. Rather than making a quick decision or choice through cognitive evaluation, they would perform a thorough examination of data from the multiple arenas and dimension, which reflects the virtue of prudence in the discerned choice.

In addition, the holistic discerned choice combined with East Asian cultural elements could prevent the practitioner from the negative influence of the gnostic-dualistic spiritual tradition, which has permeated some Christian churches. The dualistic spiritual formation tends to divide the reason from the emotion, the church from the world, and the spirit from the body. It is likely to isolate the Christian perception and awareness into a single arena of human experience so that it blocks the discernment of the genuine will and desire of God. The holistic approach, however, challenges the notion that the emotions, the body, the world, or human society should be alienated from the reason, the church and the spirit. Rather, it asks the practitioner to embrace whole aspect of human beings as the appropriate resources to perceive the movement and leading of the Holy Spirit. It can therefore shed light upon ways to overcome

the limitations of the dualistic view, so that the discerner can accept his or her emotions, body, and cultural context or society as the locus for encountering the divine will. Thus, I argue that the holistic characteristics of the discerned choice can enhance and cultivate integration and synthesis in the spiritual formation process, rather than choice-making creating a chasm between what the practitioner believes and how he or she acts.

Discerned Choice as Simultaneous and Spontaneous

The second characteristic of the discerned choice is closely related to and derived from the first: “simultaneity and spontaneity.” Henriot, referring to the “totality of one’s life,” articulates well the significance of simultaneity in the spiritual life of Christians. He asserts, based upon the concept of totality, that the genuineness and authenticity of spiritual practices in the Ignatian tradition can be found by attending to the interpersonal, social, and public aspects of the choice-maker’s spiritual life along with the individual aspects. To approach a person as a whole is thus to acknowledge the fact that all spiritual aspects are discovered in all areas of life “at the same time.”³²⁰ His point supports this trait of the discerned choice: the awareness of simultaneity is a stepping stone for building an integrating strategy of the discerned choice, both in spiritual formation as well as in articulating the holistic dimension of human beings.

The discerned choice as simultaneous and spontaneous is characterized as follows. First, it is believed that the will or desire of God in a certain choice-making context is revealed or disclosed in the various aspects of human experiences simultaneously. If someone believes the divine sign will be perceived in a certain direction and the divine voice heard in private prayer, the discerned choice is believed to discover coherent or integrating messages from other

³²⁰ Peter J. Henriot, “The Public Dimension of the Spiritual Life of the Christian: The Problem of ‘Simultaneity,’” *Soundings* (Center of Concern), 1976.

dimensions (cognitive-interpretive) or arenas of human life (interpersonal, social, or sometimes the natural arena). This leads us to the second feature, the deliberate examination of the comprehensive data. The data once perceived in one dimension or arena is supposed to be examined or investigated in the other dimensions in the discerned choice. This helps protect the discerner from being misled by narrow or biased thoughts, feelings, systems of values, etc. Moreover, this is a critical component of the discerned choice since it serves as an antidote to making a choice out of one's own isolated fantasy or out of spiritual arrogance.

Third, making the effort to seek diverse and consistent data among the full spectrum of the four arenas and the three-fold dimension of awareness keeps the discerner from being randomly manipulated by his or her own or a group's intentions or agendas. It is noticeable that one of the most vulnerable aspects of discernment is that the will of God can easily be overwhelmed by one's mortal or physical desires. The temptation to regard the resulting choice as the gift of God or revelation of God without the disciplined guidance of the discernment process brings about a manipulation of the will of God. The comprehensively covered structure of Experiences Circle will protect the discerners to be swayed or overinfluenced by in-groups of East Asian context.

The concept of the discerned choice as spontaneous pays attention to the transcendent nature of the will or desire of God, freed from human capacity. The will of God is incomprehensible, so it can neither be planned nor calculated by human capability. Even though the discerned choice as described here uses human deliberation to analyze and evaluate the phenomena discovered in the social sciences, culture, history, and religion, the meticulous endeavor can hardly cover the transcendence of the Divine nature, which is experienced as spontaneous. So, the spontaneity of the discerned choice asks us to have spiritual sensitivity to

the divine motions “here and now.”

This helps us to be deeply aware of the significance of single moments of life in a given situation since in any time and place there is the potential that the divine will and desire can be perceived spontaneously. Despite the absence of prescience in humans, our spirit and soul are endowed to be able to experience the divine presence as one of the constitutive partners of the Mystery. Here is the locus in which the Neo-Confucian concept of the human being as anthropocosmic can help in conceptualizing the active role of the human engagement in Mystery. The human being is not just the recipient of the divine revelation, but can also be considered as a part of the Mystery. This corresponds with the theological concept of the Jewish-Christian biblical articulation of the human being. As the *imago dei*, the human being is invited not only to search for the divine presence in the world, but also to participate in ongoing works of creation as co-creator, as a gift from God.

The authenticity of the discerned choice results from the discovery of the paradoxical role of the co-creator. The divine will is revealed to the human being, the co-creator, but it is not fully perceived due to its spontaneity and randomness. The incomprehensibility of the divine will is still conditioned to human nature. However, the desirable fruit of the discerned choice is indifference or spiritual freedom, not frustration or anxiousness. That is, those engaged in the discerned choice understand the paradox between the co-creator and the divine incomprehensibility as a creative invitation to discover the divine will, not as reflecting human inability to do the will of God. This posture enhances the inner freedom in engaging with spontaneous and random traits of the discerned choice rather than discourages it.

How can the simultaneous and spontaneous nature of the discerned choice be applied in practical settings of the East Asian Christian context? Now, I will revisit the story of Rev. Jung-

gu Kim, who is seriously considering leaving his position as a senior pastor. He thought about resigning because he noticed his inner frustration and exhaustion in his relationship with the core members of the church. His initial choice to resign relies exclusively on the cognitive and affective dimension and on the interpersonal arena. One of the primary aims of the discerned choice strategy, therefore, is to guide Rev. Kim to examine all aspects of himself and the church since this may lead him to perceive the simultaneous and spontaneous works of the Holy Spirit. First, the discerned choice invites an inquiry into whether his deep desire is anchored in the divine grace and desire. Second, he is asked to collect complementary data from other arenas, considering, for example, that he feels rewarded by positive experiences or transformation within church members due to his pastoral leadership. This plays a critical role in putting the given data in the same place and level without personal or cultural assumptions, which sometimes hinder the simultaneous trait of the discernment process. Third, this process readies him to examine the leadings of the Holy Spirit spontaneously in relation to himself, his family, the church members, and the church.

As soon as his inner spiritual freedom was established, he began noticing that his decision to resign was too rushed, made without comprehensive consideration. And this also enabled him to recognize the many aspects of his life and church that had been dismissed or neglected in his preliminary decision-making progress. So he began looking into various aspects of his life and the church, including the potential aftermath of his resignation on his family. This allowed him also to reflect profoundly upon his role as husband to his wife and as father to his two children. A biblical meditation on Jesus' ministry, grounded in his new spiritual freedom and reflections, refreshed his understanding of doing ministry and vocation. The holistic and simultaneous engagement with discernment required him to respond spontaneously to the

leading of the Holy Spirit in his context.

Discerned Choice as Process

The third feature of the discerned choice for East Asian Christian spiritual formation is identified as “process.” Fundamentally, the discerned choice is designed to follow the whole five-fold process of the Social Discernment Cycle: Focus for Discernment; Current Situation; Social Analysis; Prayer and Theological Reflection; and Contemplative Response. Even though it was originally devised for social discernment, as noted, it may be modified and applied to the personal dimension of the discerned choice as follows. In the first step, the practitioner of the discerned choice prepares the inner spiritual disposition, the indifference and spiritual freedom. It is essential for the discerner to commit to this preparation of the spiritual disposition, since the spiritual freedom is a necessary threshold that prompts him or her to clarify or identify the object and the topic of the discernment. The absence of spiritual freedom is thus regarded as a false start in the discerning process.

Second, the discerner is supposed to face these questions in the current situation: What is my experience in this particular situation right now, and how can I respond physically, cognitively, affectively, and spiritually to the current situation? Which arenas are involved and affected distinctively, and which are not affected in the situation? Engaging with these comprehensive questions elicits specific data or information about two dimensions: descriptions of the current situation and of the way in which the discerner would react or respond to it.

In the third step, the discerner is invited to survey or scrutinize, under the current situation, the embedded cultural assumptions, religious values, traditional customs, historical events, habitual actions, etc., that have an implicit impact upon the given situation of conflict,

tension, problem, or discrepancy. This analysis helps uncover the intrinsic linkages or hidden forces so that the discerner can analyze closely the crux of the given situation. This in-depth examination leads the discerner to move on to the fourth step: praying for certain insight or wisdom to resolve the tangled thread of the topics through theological reflection, biblical accounts, or faith tradition. Earnest engagement with contemplative prayer and theological or biblical reflections presents the discerner with the critical opportunity not only to be provided with different or transcendent perspectives, but also to search for new insights or profound wisdom to resolve the situation. It is not an overstatement to state that spiritual freedom or indifference is the most significant virtue in this procedure.

Finally, pondering or contemplating the given data through theological reflection readies the discerner to make a tentative choice as a contemplative response to the context. The discerner notices that several possible concrete responses emerge and is guided to make a decision or choice about which response is appropriate to the context. Naming and listing the pros and cons of each option is quite helpful in finding out the most relevant choice in the given context.

The most remarkable feature of the discerned choice as process originates from the fact that the choice or decision as contemplative response is tentative or temporary, since it does not pursue a finalized choice or decision. The primary aim of the discerned choice is not to make a finalized choice as a one-time event, but to implement the decision and confirm the choice as close as possible to where the divine will or desire is. It draws, therefore, on the other fact that the outcomes of confirming a choice soon become a new context or given situation for the next round of discernment. The ongoing process of discernment makes it clear that the discerned choice cannot be made as a once-in-a-lifetime event, but must be a continuing process of human engagement, like spiral movement.

What are the likely features of the discerned choice that will be affected by East Asian cultural factors? Most of all, the cosmological worldview that all realities are not permanent, but changeable, would readily assist East Asian discerners to understand the concept of the discerned choice as process. The cultural insight derived from the East Asian context sheds light upon the dialectical and paradoxical aspects of the process. East Asian discerners know that one choice can be changeable and an earlier choice will be different from a later choice. Even if several possible choices are inconsistent with each other, it is still acceptable to make a choice, since this inconsistency does not indicate an oxymoron or logical fallacy, but reflects the intrinsic dynamics of pursuing harmony and balance among many. Second, the discerned choice as process draws the discerner's attention to the complementary nature. The process plays an enlightening role in helping the discerner realize that the different options do not only create conflict or tension with each other, but also enhance the flexibility between pros and cons. Therefore, the discerned choice does not result in a final outcome; the effects of the choices must be evaluated as confirmation.

The discerner benefits from the core features of the discerned choice as process. This means that the primary action of choice is flowing, not static. The discerner has to check the status or aftermath of the choice constantly in the course of acting on the decision. Its relevance is verified by its ongoing engagement with cause and effect. Another strength is that it is easy to keep the process from outer or inner distraction or deviation. Consistent checking in the middle of the process is likely to increase the legitimacy of the discerned choice contextually. It also helps the discerner perceive that the different options for choice are complementary, not just contradictory or tension-ridden. This results in soothing the inner tension between the choices, so that the choice can nurture the spiritual freedom.

The significance of spiritual freedom (indifference or spiritual equilibrium) is the barometer of the authenticity of the discerning process. Regardless of the cultural or contextual implications, increasing the spiritual freedom of the discerner is considered as an appropriate sign of the good or better choice, and an option decreasing indifference should be eliminated as a possible option for choice.

Third, in respect to the Experience Circle, the placement of Mystery in the center of the circle implies the enduring hiddenness of God from human awareness. Thus, discernment is supposed to make an unceasing endeavor to search for the divine will and desire, which is the foundation of the concept of the discerned choice as process. This is an essential aspect of the discerned choice as a strategy for integration of spiritual formation. This feature of the process indicates the importance of spiritual sensitivity or awareness during all the moments of the choice, in all times and places. It requires us to open our spirit and soul toward the movement of Holy Spirit by engaging the process of the choice. It awakens us the fact that integrating our faith with our practical life stems from discerning or perceiving the holy presence of God in all dimensions of human experience. This is the ultimate aim of the discerned choice as strategy for integration of the spiritual life.

Discerned Choice as Communal

As I mentioned briefly in the previous section, the discerned choice is inherently communal in nature. This is supported by the biblical interpretation that, since the founding of the church, spiritual discernment was facilitated as one of the most essential disciplines in constructing and shaping the spiritual community. Luke Timothy Johnson elucidates the communal aspect of discernment by interpreting the biblical account in Acts 15, the so-called

“Apostolic Counsel of Jerusalem.” Facing the critical issues of whether Gentiles may be saved, the members of the first church counsel prayed together to discern the salvific plan of God and to ask Holy Spirit to lead them to an appropriate communal choice and decision. Clearly, the biblical account witnesses that their deliberate prayer, discussion, and discernment united them to make the right choice.

The communal nature of discernment was systematically developed and structured in the process of founding the Society of Jesuits under Ignatius’ spiritual legacy. Since the birth of their community, Ignatius and his followers took advantage of discernment in the communal decision and choice context, including situations such as constituting their community, missionary work, building institutions, etc. Several reliable scholars have reformulated these practical methods and processes of communal discernment for contemporary use.³²¹ Their work indicates that discernment in biblical evidence and Christian history was embedded in the community or collective, just as human nature is endowed from the onset. The communal discerned choice process can be outlined as follows: dispositional readiness with indifference; gathering data through storytelling about historical events; individual articulation of and reflection on the data; interpreting the movement of Holy Mystery in those experiences; seeking tentative decision or choice; and confirming the choice by diligent monitoring.

One of the most appropriate contexts for using the discerned choice in a communal setting is a search committee in a local church that is seeking pastoral staff. The committee

³²¹ George Schemel, S.J., and Sister Judith Roemer, “Communal Discernment,” *Review for Religious* 40 (Nov.-Dec. 1981): 825-36; Ladislav Orsy, S.J., *Probing The Spirit: A Theological Evaluation of Communal Discernment* (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1976); Virginia Varley, “Fostering the Process of Discerning Together,” *The Way Supplement* 85 (Spring 1996): 84-96; William Barry, “Toward Communal Discernment: Some Practical Suggestions,” *The Way Supplement* 58 (Spring 1987): 104-12; Mary Benet McKinney, “Discerning Community Leadership,” *Review for Religious* 58 (July-August 1999): 424-28; Patricia Wittberg, “Community and Obedience: Musings on Two Ambiguities,” *Review for Religious* 59, no. 5 (Sept.-Oct. 2000): 526-36.

members are initially invited to establish the spiritual disposition of indifference. This initial step for spiritual freedom should be paid more attention to in the East Asian context since the cultural features of collective society and the interdependent frame of the self could weaken the spiritual disposition and probably interfere with the communal process. Deliberate guidelines for indifference should be given at every meeting of the committee since the interdependent self and collective society members are vulnerable to influences from outside. Next, a historical survey about the current situation of the church is shared among the members, which is the formative step in creating a common ground for the process. Third, each member is asked to articulate his or her intrinsic experiences among the church members, which will be a healing or reconciling function of the process. The key point is that gathering the data should examine all arenas of the experiences of the church ranging from the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social to the nature arenas. Fourth, all members are invited to practice contemplative reflection based upon the Bible and theological insights. In the fifth step, the committee engages with discerning the will or desire of God toward this spiritual community by contemplatively listening to each other. This involves seeking God's help in the provisional decision.

After monitoring members' inner dynamics, especially affectivity and peaceful relationships among members, the committee moves to make a tentative decision and choice. The spiritual freedom among the committee is the decisive indicator of whether the decision or choice is on the right track of following the divine will and desire. In concluding the discernment process, seeking consensus and confirmation is vital since it means something more than the simple words imply. Consensus brings about unity, and it may even lead to an experience of a special sense of wholeness. Finally, the experience of wholeness through consensus prompts each member to recognize that he or she has been involved in a mystery that has touched the life

of each person present; it is God who has worked this change in them.

It is critical to acknowledge the complementary and mutually reciprocal dynamics between communal and personal discernment. Communal discernment is based on individual discernment. Without personal engagement with discernment, the communal discernment cannot be grounded in the Holy Mystery, owing to the absence of spiritual disposition. Personal discernment counts upon the communal discernment as its confirmation. If the personal discernment process has no communal aspect, it can easily be private discernment or take place just in the intrapersonal arena. The spiritual direction session is decisive for keeping the individual from becoming private or narrow-minded. Mutual discernment with the spiritual director in direction sessions should be practiced since it fulfills the genuine sense of the holistic discernment by complementary and mutually reciprocal dynamics.

A Discerning Being: Theological Anthropology

The delineation of the theological anthropology of the discerned choice relies heavily on the Jewish-Christian Scripture, especially the concept of the *imago dei* from the Hebrew Bible and of *Immanuel* from the New Testament. The notion of *imago dei* articulated in Genesis explains how and why human beings exist: human beings are created in the image of God, and this enables them to communicate and have a relationship with God, the creator, without any mediator. This is the biblical evidence that human beings were not just created for divine pleasure or satisfaction, but out of relationship (Gen. 1:26-27). And the creation story unfolds the way in which the human being has the endowed right to nurture and sustain the rest of the creature (Gen. 1:29-30). The endowed privilege presupposes the right relationship with the creator, and this endowed capacity of human beings opens further the potential to be co-agents in

the ever-present creating works of God. God created humans then and now invites human beings to join God as co-workers.

It must be recognized that human creativity is an endowed gift, which means that it does not originate from within. This privilege prompts human beings to see themselves as chosen beings who take part in the creating work of God in a given time and space. Once the obstacles that hinder the direct connection with God have been eliminated and an endeavor has been made to overcome human limitations, human nature is honored to perceive, recognize, and discern the divine creative motions among the world. This is critical evidence or the initial foundation of the theological belief that the human being is called to commit the discerned choice through the discernment process.

The second biblical and theological foundation of the discerned choice is indicated by the remarkable notion of the *Immanuel* from the New Testament: God with us (Matthew 1:23). This claims the crux of the historical existence of Jesus, the divine incarnation, and his ever-present accompaniment within human beings. God chose to become flesh and descend into mortality. This can be articulated in terms of discernment: God discerns and embodies the divine choice into incarnation as his salvific plan. That is, God engaged himself in discernment and this resulted in a specific action within human history; God became flesh, vulnerable and visible.

Another privilege endowed in the human beings is that God takes advantage of the mortal capacity of human nature to reveal Godself within the mortal world. God is immanent among human existence. God chooses to dwell with human nature, not as a creator, but as one of the created beings. His presence is now perceived by human nature. God allows himself to be revealed to human nature. This grace not only promotes the building up of an intimate relationship with God, but also the divine nature enters into individual human nature to heal,

cultivate, and nurture the distorted image of God. Here, human capacity to acknowledge, perceive, and finally discern God is discovered, and this becomes the second foundation of the theological articulation of the discerned choice. The choice followed by discernment is endowed originally to human nature.

The third ground of the theological construction of the discerned choice is rooted in a particular Christian historical heritage, the Ignatian tradition of finding God in all things. The extraordinary effort and comprehensive engagement in the spiritual practices of Ignatius of Loyola have been historically appreciated due to the key concepts of his spirituality as well as his founding of the Society of Jesus. Ignatius and his followers in history have corroborated through their community, mission, theology, and discernment that God is found in all things and that human beings are endowed to find God in all. It is undeniable that the holistic characteristics of Ignatian spirituality are the most critical element in the way in which the human being discerns God.

The richness of these theological and biblical insights verifies that human nature is supposed to engage with the discerned choice. *Holistic* discerned choice encourages us to put our whole selves into the *process* of seeking God's guidance. The belief that we are temples of the Holy Spirit invites the individual to use all the senses, thoughts and feelings, reactions, moods, imaginations and dreams to discern the Holy Spirit's lead. Holistic discerned choice reflects this growing faith in a God of surprises who speaks to us through Scripture, church teachings, other people, and external events, as well as in the silence of our own hearts.

The aim of a discerned choice is to refine the *holistic* acoustics of the Spirit so that we can be more closely united to God in obedient faith. To live with a discerned choice is to believe that earth is crammed with heaven and that God is to be found everywhere in the holy ground of

our existence. As a *process*, discernment is decision-making that invites God into the process and relies on God to be the telling influence in the choices we make. Those spiritual practitioners equipped with discerned choice are therefore willing to engage in the deliberate process, including comprehensive investigation, thorough examination of data, pondering the biblical wisdom and theological insights, contemplative discernment, and tentative choice-making.

A discerned choice-maker is profoundly aware that the divine will and desire is experienced by human nature as *simultaneous and spontaneous*, so that humans view spiritual sensitivity and openness to everything as most significant for discernment and choice. They acknowledge that an experience of Holy Mystery in one arena will overflow or bleed into all the other arenas of a single life. A new prompting in one arena will have a reverberation in the other arenas, so that the discerned choicer is used responsively to look for the movement or stirrings of Holy Mystery in all arenas and all dimensions of experience.

What can we describe as plausible contributions or advantages of the discerned choice for East Asian Christian spirituality? First of all, the discerned choice represents the constitutive function of the culture in discerning God's will in context. It is not difficult to notice in Christian history that culture has been treated with negative connotations as a worldly or antichrist force. Culture in a comprehensive sense is not seen as a negative factor that should be overcome or competed with by transcending force, but as a core kernel to explore the implicit features of the human experiences of Holy Mystery. So, this research makes the critical assumption that culture should be examined as a significant implement for entering into the core of spiritual experiences. It is an essential component embedded in the multi-dimensional experiences of human nature and is affected deeply in various levels of human awareness including the un- and subconscious and the non-thematic or intuitive levels.

For this project, I undertook an experimental investigation of the ways in which culture is the constitutive and constructive locus not only in which human beings are able to discern the movement of the Holy Mystery, but also in which their spiritual experiences and practices are formed and shaped. Hence, the main argument of this research could assist East Asian Christians to embrace actively culture as a constitutive component for discerned choice. In conclusion, the discerned choice is not focused upon using professional skills to discern the will of God, but is more about “becoming a human being,” which God originally intended for humans from the outset—*imago dei*. Now we will survey the practical implications of the discerned choice in certain situations.

The Cycle of Discerned Choice as Christian Spiritual Formation: The Seven Steps

This project has explored the inner nature or main characteristics of discerned choice by integrating the Western Christian spiritual classics with cultural aspects of spiritual experiences in the East Asian context. Now I will address questions related to the universal applicability of discerned choice: “Does the discerned choice offer Christians a way to enhance cultural sensitivity or cultivate cultural variations in spiritual practices or in the spiritual direction context?” “If it is not limited to certain cultural contexts, how can the discerned choice be facilitated or utilized in practical or specific contexts?” “Can the discerned choice be applied beyond the cultural context of East Asian Christians? If so, in what ways might the discerned choice be embodied as Christian spiritual formation?”

Any endeavor to answer these questions should begin by constructing a theoretical framework or foundation. At this point, it is appropriate to outline a specific method or practical procedure for the discerned choice as Christian spiritual formation by exploring the following

questions: “How can the major features of discerned choice be embodied in real situations?” “What are the practical procedures of the discerned choice?” “What are the tangible methods of discerned choice in spiritual direction or retreat contexts that could be facilitated by spiritual practitioners or directors?” “What kinds of practical procedures embody the core characteristics of the discerned choice in ways that are holistic, spontaneous and simultaneous, an ongoing process, and communal?” Answering these questions will not only help construct the practical steps in making a discerned choice but will also verify its universal applicability in any cultural context.

I introduce the Cycle of Discerned Choice (hereafter CDC) as a new form of spiritual discernment that embraces cultural experiences as a constitutive component in Christian spiritual formation (see Figure 4). The cycle consists of seven different steps or movements that are deeply interwoven or intermingled as part of a holistic process. Practitioners should follow the specific order of these seven steps in order to achieve the best outcome.

[Figure 4]

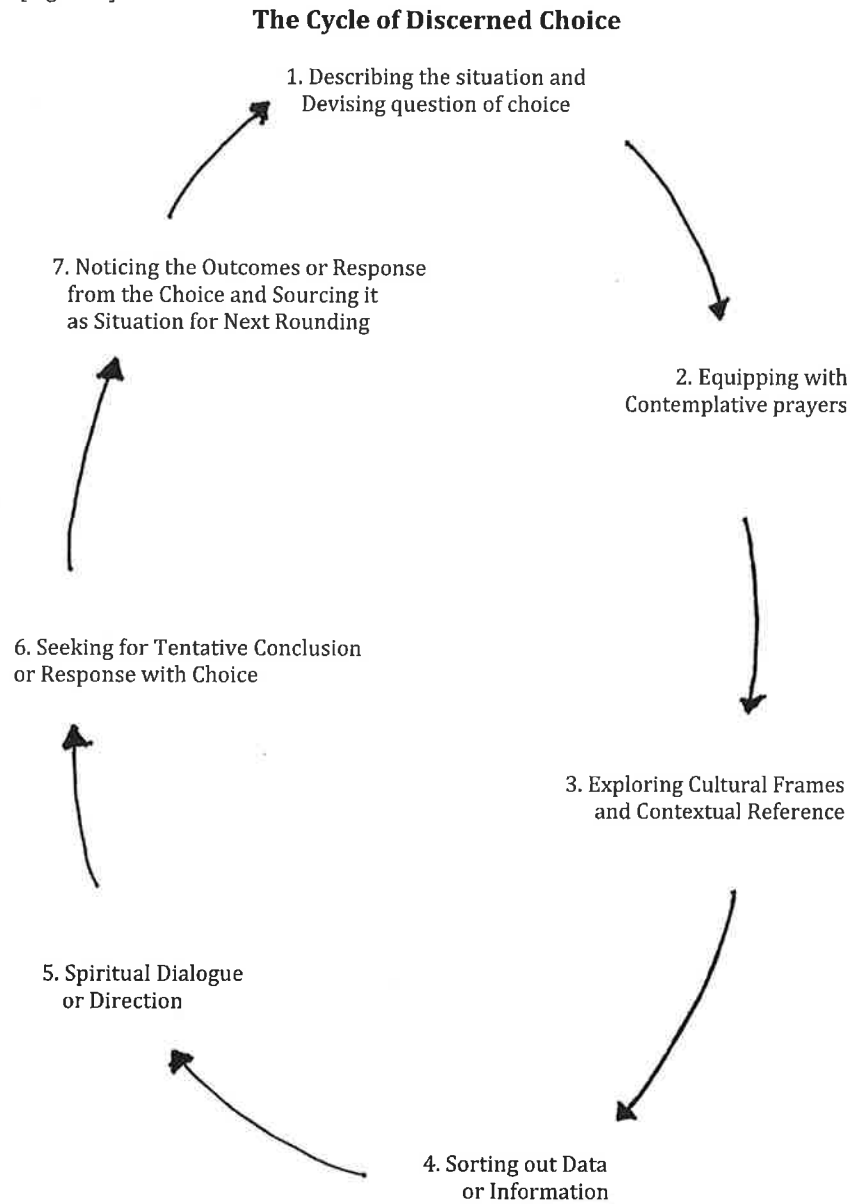


Figure 4. The Cycle of Discerned Choice

First, the discerned choice begins with the inner awareness or spiritual commitment of the retreatant, spiritual directee, or practitioner. This initial step demands their deliberate engagement with the inner awareness that they have faced troubles or problems that they desire to bring up in prayer. They are invited to identify the situations or contexts in which their spiritual life has been in trouble. Then, the practitioner is invited to describe the problems and events associated with the trouble they are facing. These manifested issues are likely to be associated with relationships and the interpersonal dimension, since conflict with others causes internal or external tension. Then, the practitioner is encouraged to carefully reframe the perceived problem into the form of choice or decision questions. For example, “Am I supposed to stay in the United States or return to my home country after I receive the doctoral degree?” “Is this the right time for me to resign from my current pastoral ministry, or should I wait until later? If not now, when would be a good time for this church as well as for me?” “Would it be alright for me to enter into theological seminary this year, or should I wait until my father is convinced of my life vocation as a Christian minister?” “Is my girlfriend the one I have looked for to be my wife and my life-long soul mate, or not?” “Among these candidates, who would be the best pastor for our community church?”

The desirable inner condition, which should be facilitated by a director or mentor, is that the practitioner is fully convinced that their problems or troubles have not been given to them by God as punishment, trial, or reward but that through them God is calling them into a deeper relationship with God and to growth, renewal and transformation of their life. In describing the situation that is troubling them, it is important for the practitioner to portray it as realistically as it possible, since this will be the foundation of their preparation for pure desire and spiritual equilibrium in contemplative prayer.

In the **second** step of the CDC, the practitioner is led into contemplative prayer in the Ignatian manner, in which inner desire, spiritual indifference, imaginative contemplation, and discernment of spirits together support the directee's spiritual journey. In other contexts besides spiritual retreats, such as spiritual direction, various brief forms of contemplative prayer could also be introduced or facilitated to deepen spiritual awareness or perception, including *Lectio Divina*, the Examen prayer, Centering Prayer, or the Jesus prayer. The practitioners will be asked to make a thorough commitment to contemplative prayer in solitude in order to seek God's guidance as well as spiritual equilibrium, which implies that physical or selfish desires will be eliminated in favor of sacred desires. Following the way of Jesus in imaginative contemplation, physical desires will be discriminated from holy ones, and spiritual indifference will be maintained. As the leadings of the Holy Spirit are discerned in the spiritual framework of consolation and desolation, the practitioner discovers the ultimate love of God toward their soul and life. One of the most desirable outcomes in the second step will be that the practitioner will drop any attempt to criticize external objects by complaining about others or their environment; instead, they might notice the part they have played in aggravating the conflict and tension. Next, the practitioner confirms that God's steadfast love is resident in their soul and that God dwells in their trouble, confessing that God desires to meet them through the problems and troubles described in the previous step.

The practitioner cultivates the intrapersonal level and enhances the intuitive or affective dimension in the second step. The East Asian self tends to become aware in this step that the influence of strong social bonding and hierarchical structures is lessening, since these forces mislead them into relying too much on social connections and networks instead of their own inner resources. They might realize that this has deceived them through distorted desires or has

disguised their true self with a mask or social face, hindering their soul from coming close to God, the sacred inner place of their being. As their intimate relationship with God grows in their soul, their desire for a successful life based upon a worldly or materialistic value system will be reduced and their spiritual indifference will be enhanced.

On the other hand, the practitioner from a Western cultural background, with a strongly individualistic or independent self, will likely feel challenged in this stage because they are likely to persist in an inner disposition of autonomy or the desire for a self-centered lifestyle. The imaginative contemplation of the life and passion of Jesus implicitly invites the Western self to acknowledge Jesus' calling to engage in his salvific work. This requires them to be involved deeply and authentically with the distorted world and human nature. They might be awakened by the spiritual leading of the Holy Spirit asking them to embrace the connectedness or interdependence among sacred beings in the spiritual sphere. This inner process could play a critical role in overcoming the individualistic or independent disposition of the Western self. The practitioner might become aware of an invitation to extend their self by connecting with other beings or selves, especially in a situation or context that is generating pain or suffering. It is important to convince the Western practitioner that liberation from self-centeredness is a desirable fruit of this step. As part of the process, the CDC asks practitioners, regardless of whether their cultural background is Western or Eastern, to continuously engage in the spiritual practices during all the stages. It is not one-time event. This will sustain the practitioner's inner faculties and aid in generating the desired spiritual dynamics.

In the **third** step of the CDC, the practitioner is invited to explore the cultural values or worldview that is embedded in their life stories or the problems they perceive in the interpersonal or social level within the Experience Circle. Whereas the East Asian self is more effectively led

to focus on strengthening their individuality and independence as complementary ways toward integration, balance, and harmony rather than on external sources and social connectivity, the Western self is invited to take more consideration of external resources and relationships as spiritually constitutive components that will liberate them from a self-centered or self-bonded spirituality or lifestyle. For Western selves, meaningful or significant figures in the relations of the practitioner are actively embraced as the one who offers a spiritual or liberating voice and perspective, enabling the practitioner to overcome the inherent limitations stemming from individualism and the independent self. In addition, based upon Jesus' calling to Christian vocation, the definition of the successful life should be reframed by moving away from the concept of strengthening the practitioner's autonomy through money or power, instead enhancing mutual reciprocity or cultivating interdependence and interrelatedness among people. Still, spiritual freedom and sacred desires are a prerequisite throughout this whole procedure and are considered a barometer of whether the spiritual journey is taking place in an authentic or genuine way.

For the East Asian self, cultural values related to one's social faces or reputation are considered the most powerful stumbling blocks in the practitioner's attempt to overcome their distorted, physical or selfish desires and establish genuine desires within the soul. The discernment of spirits may be most actively involved in this step since this will assist the practitioner to distinguish which of his or her feelings or affections are stemming from the Holy Spirit and which from cultural norms or assumptions. Because cultural assumptions, norms, and values often function in the culture as sacred or spiritual, it sometimes is critical to identify one's value system and the choices or decisions associated with it. It is essential to discern or sift through the movements of consolation and desolation in the intuitive or affective realm. The

desirable inner values here are prudence and perseverance, since this step demands a thorough investigation of the practitioner's inner dynamics and he or she could be tempted to drop out in the middle of the process. Acknowledging that all data or information are tentative and temporary helps the practitioner to participate in the procedure with a positive spirit.

Up to this point in the procedure in making a discerned choice, the practitioner is supposed to pay more attention to the collection of appropriate or meaningful information discovered in the various dimensions or levels of his or her experiences. Since holistic and comprehensive approaches and investigations are critical in the discerned choice, the inner disposition to be open to spontaneous or simultaneous data is also taken seriously as a constitutive component of the process. The movement between the second and third steps should not be viewed as a clear-cut procedure; rather, the practitioner should be encouraged to move back and forth between the two steps in order to obtain more relevant and reliable inner resources related to the described situation and associated problems. In seeking appropriate information and shifting the practitioner's perspective or frame of reference, a brief investigation of his or her family tree or the use of psychological tools related to personality traits is recommended as a complementary method, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator the Enneagram, or Internal Family Systems.

In the **fourth** step of the CDC, the practitioner is led to sort out the data or information gathered through the inner work or spiritual exploration of the previous steps, possibly using the Experience Circle. He or she identifies various personality differences, cultural value systems, individual assumptions, social norms, religious teachings, or individual convictions interwoven with the problematic situation that is being addressed. Developing analytic descriptions of the situation and drawing up lists of pros and cons regarding possible choices or decisions might be

productive at this point. The data or information should include the inner disposition or inclination of the practitioner to each potential option or direction. What desire is elicited in response to each possible choice? Which options might offer more spiritual freedom? Where are consolation or desolation perceived, and how would their movement flow in each possible choice?

In the **fifth** step of the CDC, the practitioner engages in spiritual direction or conversation with a spiritual mentor, not because the spiritual director or mentor is asked to make the choice or decision for the practitioner but because the spiritual conversation will deepen and cultivate the spiritual awareness or discernment process within the practitioner's soul. Various pieces of information and the subsequent options and choices or decisions should be examined carefully. Through the spiritual conversation, the practitioner is invited to engage in contemplation, through which he or she seeks spiritual freedom and the purification of their desire. Within this desirable inner disposition, they are invited to think about where the sacred desire or God's desire is leading them. Which choice would embody the will or desire of God in relation to the practitioner's spiritual life? It is significant that the ultimate aim of spiritual direction is not to make a choice but to enhance the directee's intimate relationship with God, and any choice or decision should be affirmed with this awareness. Therefore, spiritual directors with East Asian selves should recognize that they tend to be tempted to give specific guidance or direction to the practitioner, especially since East Asian practitioners may ask their directors to give them specific directions or to make a choice or decision for them. The East Asian self could easily be captivated by the hierarchical relationship and its dynamics and desire to take advantage of it. The consistent identification of the director or mentor as a spiritual companion helps avoid the temptation to engage in charismatic leadership or a hierarchical role, and this has great potential

to help the East Asian practitioner to build a healthy relationship with the director or mentor. The director should consistently support and cultivate the practitioner's inner sense of intimacy with God. Furthermore, it is worthwhile to encourage the practitioner to utilize his or her imagination to project possible outcomes from each choice or decision in their life during the direction.

In the **sixth** step, the practitioner is asked to make a tentative choice or decision in relation to the described problem. Any strong emotional involvement should be met with spiritual equilibrium and purified desire. The only desirable spiritual disposition at this stage is the desire that the divine will or God's desire will be embodied or incarnated through the proposed choice or decision. In other words, a sense of spiritual freedom and purified desire is critical in making a tentative choice or decision.

In the **seventh** and last step, the spiritual awareness of the practitioner should be focused on the potential outcomes, aftermath, results, or fruits of the choice. Again, spiritual freedom in this procedure verifies the authenticity of the practitioner's contemplative process. That is, a response or reaction that enhances spiritual freedom should be considered as a desirable outcome, but any choice that reduces or decreases spiritual freedom should be disregarded. In addition, naming the people involved in carrying out the action, noticing how the potential or tentative action might affect these people and the situation, and observing how the choice functions and its dynamics shift are part of this step. Then, evaluating the tentative choice and how it will be executed in the real-life situation should be conducted. At this point, the discerned choice is not yet finalized, but this is the procedure for confirming and discovering how to implement the choice.

The CDC supports the four core features of discerned choice, manifesting the distinctive and relevant characteristics of Christian spiritual discernment. The desirable outcomes of the

CDC should also manifest these features. The first feature is that the CDC is inherently an ongoing process, implying that the procedure reveals its genuine nature over time. The process enhances sustainability and the security or safety of all constitutive components involved in the procedure. Second, it contains holistic features by including the diverse dimensions of human experiences that reveal the divine presence and will. It prevents the choice from being distorted or narrowed by focusing exclusively on one or two dimensions of experience. Not only does it cultivate great inclusivity, but it also enhances the harmony among the constitutive components, including the cultural aspects of life. Third, the CDC encourages the spontaneous and simultaneous aspects of the discerned choice by prompting the practitioner to notice the leadings of the Holy Spirit in a given situation and timeframe. It enhances the spiritual awareness or awakening within a soul by strengthening hopefulness due to the spiritual expectation of discovering divine guidance or direction in a given situation. Fourth and last, it is communal because it embraces collective data from the holistic aspects of human experience. It cultivates collaborative or cooperative work among the constitutive components, ranging from the intrapersonal and intuitive levels and the affective and cognitive dimensions to the interpersonal, social, cultural, and natural levels. In addition, it requires spiritual conversation with a director or mentor so that the discerned choice bears more authentic or genuine fruit through a communal discernment process.

I am now ready to answer the questions posed above regarding the universal applicability of the CDC in Christian spiritual formation. This project has demonstrated that taking the East Asian sensibility into serious consideration illuminates cultural dimensions within the discernment process that are operative in all contexts. Western discernment strategies have somewhat obscured or have been unable to notice the significance of the East Asian sensibility

since they have been blinded by cultural assumptions of individualism, independent selves, and analytic thinking. Taking the particular context of the East Asian culture seriously leads to rediscovering authentic features of the process: its holistic, spontaneous, simultaneous, ongoing process, and communal features. This reveals the practical applicability of the CDC in all contexts, and it results in a more intentional process of making a discerned choice in Christian spiritual formation.

How should the discerned choice be applied in a practical context? The following is an account of the application of the CDC in a specific life situation in a way that bore desirable fruits. Sung-dong, a young adult Korean male, was struggling between his vocation as a Christian minister and the wishes of his Confucian-observant father. In the cultural context of the interdependent framework of self and collective society, choosing one's job or occupation is not regarded as a private, individual decision. Sometimes, making a career choice is related to the accomplishment of the parents' life-long expectations for their children. Sung-dong's case belongs in this category. He is the only son of his father and extended family. Based upon the Confucian tradition and collective expectations, he is destined from birth to keep the Confucian virtues for the sake of the family tradition and legacy. From the father's point of view, Sung-dong's vision of becoming a Christian minister is a serious abandonment or rejection of the family tradition and even of his parents and forefathers.

A spiritual director or mentor who specializes in the discerned choice formulation invited Sung-dong to engage in the seven-fold process of discerning his vocation, asking first for the spiritual virtue of prudence. **First**, Sung-dong was requested to articulate or reformulate his current situation into a question about his choice, which he framed as follows: Is it appropriate or meaningful for me to enter into an M.Div. program, despite the fact that it would go against my

father's expectations and my family's values? Articulating the question was very helpful for Sung-dong in narrowing down and focusing simply upon the core of the problem and the tension around his situation. It would be helpful for the spiritual director or mentor to clarify at this stage that the question about the choice is not intended to result in choosing either this or that option. Moreover, it is not meant to judge who will stand closer to God or who will be rejected by God. Peaceful harmony with all people involved in the issue would be the most desirable outcome of the spiritual journey, rather than intensifying the conflict or relational tension.

In the **second** phase, Sung-dong joined a weekly group spiritual practice guided by a spiritual director for a period of 12 weeks. Various contemplative prayer methods were practiced ranging from the Examen, Lectio Divina, and Centering Prayer to the Jesus Prayer, which cultivated and enriched his spiritual awareness and discernment. The imaginative contemplation of biblical accounts shed light upon his inner sense of his life vocation as a Christian minister as he followed Jesus' journey. Sung-dong experienced inner conflict between his sense of vocation and his family's values when he felt brief regret and disappointment because of the interpersonal conflict and tension with his father. The spiritual practices, however, played a critical role in affirming or confirming his sense of life vocation after he encountered God's compassion toward his parent. He had a pivotal moment in which the Holy Spirit touched his mind, soothing his feelings toward his parent. Immediately, he noticed that God felt compassion for his parent, since God knew what it was like to lose his only son. Sung-dong was fully convinced that his desire to become a Christian minister was similar to the loss of the only son from his father's point of view because of Sung-dong's religious and cultural conversion. God the father knew the parent's sense of tragedy, and God fully understood his sense of loss. Sung-dong turned out to be convinced by God's experience of compassion and took it as his own compassion. Later on, he

expressed that this gave him a sense of release in his mind and soul. He was asked to achieve indifference or spiritual freedom as an internal quality, which shaped his mindset to be free from any biases about the outcome of the process. Even if the outcome turned out to be opposite to his initial expectations, he was encouraged to accept it.

The **third** step of the CDC was for Sung-dong to describe the present situation within the four arenas and several dimensions. This led him to bring up non-thematic, imaginative, and affective data and information as well as the possible aftermath of his preferred choice on his interpersonal or social relationships. Several cultural features were named as core underneath the relational conflicts: the Confucian values of his family, transmitting the previous generation's family occupation to the next generation, paternal will considered as the highest authority, faithful submission as the desirable attitude of a son, Christianity as a foreign and heretic religion in the Korean tradition, Christian core values weakening family bonding and the collective community, and so on. Sung-dong had viewed these as antagonistic components in the seeking of his life vocation, but he eventually began to see them from a neutral standpoint without prejudice or bias. These values had been observed as primary values by his parents and forefathers, and they had protected the family and society from historical hardships and suffering over the past several centuries of Korean history. Sung-dong's inner attitude toward his parent's expectation or desires moved from rejecting, dismissing, and arguing to accepting, recognizing, and admitting the harsh reality.

The **fourth** phase of the cycle of the discerned choice guided Sung-dong to collect the data or information that he had newly acknowledged or become aware of. He was asked to have spiritual freedom and make a consistent endeavor to have a balanced or neutral attitude toward this information. The one-way communication he had been having with his father had hindered

him from both continuing to pursue his vocation and from maintaining a constructive relationship with his father. He regretted the fact that he had not attempted to convince his father about his conviction concerning his life-long vocation. That realization led Sung-dong to awkwardly inform his father of his desire to be a Christian minister, and it ended up with his father furiously rejecting him.

Spiritual direction, the **fifth** step of the CDC, led him to explore the distinctive thoughts coming up within his mind and to figure out why and where they were coming from. Sung-dong began to understand his father's position from a different perspective, hearing about the life history of his Confucian family (analysis). Several biblical accounts played a pivotal role in turning his eyes from "within himself" to "toward his father." A narcissistic or self-pitying attitude was infrequently presented, but that shifted into an increasing sense of pity toward his father (theological or biblical insight; transformative transition from the imaginative-affective level to non-thematic). After these critical steps, Sung-dong was able to face God's desire for this situation: God's calling him to be a minister should not intensify tension or conflict in human relationships. The genuine calling of God instead initiates a humble, calm, and peaceful atmosphere; further, he was convinced that God was calling him as the divine instrument to establish peace among people and the world (contemplative prayer and discernment). This did not imply, however, that his calling to be a minister should be abandoned. He felt invited by the Holy Spirit to take another round of the discerned choice to consider the newly given situation (contemplative reaction).

This flowed into the **sixth** step of CDC in which Sung-dong made the choice not to abandon his life vocation regardless of his father's objections. However, he was fully convinced that God was inviting him to restore the relationship with father, through which he would further

seek his life vocation. And Sung-dong was deeply aware that he had been given the crucial responsibility to take care of his parents regardless of his commitment to Christianity. On this occasion, his sense of spiritual freedom seemed to be firmer, since he noted that the desirable fruits of a divine vocation should be discovered within spiritual freedom through the bearing the holy fruits. The process of the discerned choice created a new desire within Sung-dong and a hope for the fulfillment of the divine will, not of his own will, which is the distinctive sign of spiritual freedom in the process.

At the **seventh** and final step, Sung-dong started devising wise or useful ways to communicate with his father, not just with the intention to persuade him but to show his father that he had genuine appreciation of his Confucian fidelity as well as to strengthen the sense of family connection with his parents by committing himself to being faithful in his relationships. This was his new strategy, devised out of the spiritual journey of the CDC. He will likely draw out of this process new experiences, situations, and awareness that will be the new context for the next round of the CDC.

CDC Spinning off Toward Cultural Spirituality

What kind of tangible fruits are born from the whole procedure of the CDC? In what ways could the methodology of the CDC influence the reshaping of spiritual formation that is actively involved with cultural components? One of the major contributions of the CDC is that it calls upon cultural components as constitutive elements in spiritual discernment and the choice making process in Christian spiritual formation. The CDC facilitates planting a spiritual practice of the Western tradition in a new cultural context in a complementary and reciprocal manner. Consistently going through the steps of the CDC helps one discover that the role of spiritual

indifference in Ignatian spirituality stands out more distinctively in discerning the will of God and in making choices. A discerned choice is the embodiment of one's desire with the received guidance of or interaction with the Holy Spirit or the contemplation of the holy will given in one's life. Embodying desires through discerned choice requires ultimately turning in the spiritual rhythm of the Holy Spirit. This implies that one's deepest desire is to be liberated from physical, materialistic, and mundane desires in order to be purified into the greater desire, that of 'being united with God.' We can identify the main feature of the greater desire as equilibrium, spiritual freedom, or balance: spiritual indifference to the status quo. The inner gifts of discerned choice are inherently designed not to make a specific choice, but to enhance one's inner freedom grounded in one's intimate relationship with God. The sheer desire to do God's will is hallowed in one's life and incarnated in the world as spiritual indifference.

It is not surprising that East Asian (or Korean) Christian practitioners have brought up with the Neo-Confucian concept of *Kyung* after going through the CDC due to the way it resonates with the concept of spiritual indifference. *Kyung* is the practice of mindfulness or reverence, considered the crux of the neo-Confucian way in cultivating one's inner capacity and in being transformed ultimately into a sage. The Neo-Confucian founding fathers, Zhu Xi and T'oegye, believed that the human nature and mind is inherently endowed by the Heavenly principle. The principle in human nature, however, is dispersed by the muddiness and impurity of the material force that results in moral absence, implying a lack of harmony with the order within heaven and earth. Phenomenally, the moral mind is distorted by emotional instability. The primary goal of *kyung* as a way of self-cultivation is to correct, control, or purify the material force/Seven Emotions and to illuminate the moral mind, the heavenly endowed nature. The practice of contemplative quiet sitting and habitual self-examination was named by T'oegye as

the practical method of kyung.

T'oegye thought of kyung as the first principle of Confucian learning as well as of religious reverence for Heaven's Principle. He believed that holding fast to kyung with self-examination and self-rectification leads to the refined state of single-mindedness, giving rise to an increase in the significance of abstinence from bodily desires and emotional fluctuation. This will ultimately lead one to cultivate one's interior faculties enough to achieve a moral nature, fulfilling the heavenly endowed nature within one's life; self-cultivation leads to becoming a sage.

In the dynamic of the CDC in the East Asian Christian context, the two spiritual ideas of spiritual indifference and kyung are encountered during the East Asian practitioner's spiritual journey. Remarkably, however, spiritual indifference and kyung are not in conflict with each other in East Asian spiritual formation. Rather, they mutually and reciprocally work in constructive ways to embody the core features of the new method of spiritual discernment, the CDC. They are similar in that they both emphasize the inner disposition of single-mindedness or equilibrium emancipated from bodily desires and emotional fluctuation. Their expression, however has been culturally or historically shaped. While Confucianism notes that the inner disposition of a single or purified mind is to fulfill the heavenly endowed nature within one's life, Ignatian spiritual practices guide practitioners to pursue spiritual indifference or equilibrium.

The discerned choice is less likely to be embodied or practiced by East Asian Christians unless both spiritual frames of reference are considered. First, the Neo-Confucian concept of kyung cannot be employed independently in the Christian spiritual practice of discerned choice since it does not contain the core of Christian faith in Jesus as Christ. Kyung without Ignatian discernment will not be regarded as Christian spiritual practice since it blurs the ultimate goal of

Christian spiritual formation. Secondly, the Ignatian model of spiritual practices in discerned choice is not fully, independently applicable to East Asian Christian spirituality since it is inherently insufficient for cultivating a holistic, simultaneous, spontaneous, and communal process of discernment that actively embraces the East Asian cultural component.

The concept of *kyung* in Neo-Confucian spirituality could spur Ignatian spiritual practitioners to engage the holistic and comprehensive spectrum of human experience because it illuminates the biblical concept of *imago dei*, emphasizing the human capability to perceive, discern, and co-work the divine will in East Asian Christianity. The positive view of human nature as originally endowed by the Heavenly nature could also be utilized in cultivating human capacity in investigating principles, self-examination, contemplative listening, and extending knowledge. It could strengthen the core values of Ignatian spiritual practices, discerning the will of God and choosing based on God's will. In addition, the concept of *kyung* enhances one's spiritual awareness of the interconnectedness and interrelatedness in creation since it asks for profound engagement in extending one's knowledge of how everything is connected in implicit and explicit form and of how mysteriously the divine will has unfolded in human history.

In addition, several features could be considered significant Ignatian contributions to cultivating the spiritual practice of *kyung* in Neo-Confucianism. First, the imaginative contemplation of the Ignatian method sheds light upon clarifying and strengthening the Christian identity in spiritual practice. The imaginative contemplation of the biblical account of Jesus' journey prompts practitioners to respond to Jesus' calling, to discern their life vocation, to act out their faith in given situations, and to form Christian identity. Second, the prayer methods of discernment in the Ignatian tradition could stimulate East Asian practitioners of *kyung* by encouraging them to do a thorough examination of their innermost dynamics. Third, Ignatian

contemplation also reaffirms the Neo-Confucian practice of quiet sitting as an authentic spiritual practice in discerning the divine will embedded in the world. Fourth, the Ignatian concept of consolation/desolation helps improve the spiritual skills of kyung so that East Asian practitioners can handle their emotions in wise and constructive ways in spiritual formation.

The CDC turns out to be a synergetic and complementary method for integrating the Neo-Confucian worldview with Ignatian spiritual practice. Moving around the cycle offers a glimpse of the potential of the cultural spirituality of Christianity. Employing spiritual practices that have been developed historically in the Western tradition in the East Asian context or other cultural contexts could be an appropriate way to cultivate the Christian spiritual formation of discernment. Christian cultural spirituality does not intend to create a new method of spiritual formation exclusively applicable or relevant in a certain context. It is defined as an academic or ministerial endeavor to integrate what Christian spirituality has already been gifted from the tradition in appropriate and constructive ways in given situations and particular cultures. In that sense, the CDC is one of the legitimate or relevant tools or models in shaping cultural spiritual formation. Therefore, it is helpful to clarify that the primary audience of this method is ministers, spiritual directors, spiritual mentors, and practitioners in the East Asian Christian context. The second intended audience includes spiritual directors or practitioners who are engaging with East Asian Christians in a spiritual practice context. This does not exclude non-East Asian Christians from utilizing the CDC. Any practitioners who are convinced that cultural components could be constitutive in spiritual formation could also discover the core value of the CDC in their practice. Adopting the CDC could deepen and enrich their spiritual experiences, discernment, choices, and intimate relationship with God in a holistic way.

Practical Implications

How can the CDC be facilitated in a certain situation or context? Is it applicable universally in ministerial or parish pastoral contexts? Even if this conceptualization of the discerned choice is based on the East Asian context, it is presumed that the fundamental formula of the discerned choice can be relevant in any situation where an individual or a group would engage with Christian choice or decision making, drawing from their cultural context. The applied context ranges from multicultural contexts, pastoral leadership, and Christian ethical discourse.

Multicultural Spiritual Direction

One of the most conspicuous features in practicing spiritual direction is that the direction setting is becoming more multicultural. It is recognized that direction is a locus for an encounter between two different cultures. As the spiritual journey starts, the two different life experiences embedded in different cultures accompany the travelers. So, Molina and Haney awaken us to the importance of an appreciation or acceptance of a directee's cultural formation by introducing the concept of 'co-culture' in supervision and direction.³²²

It is primarily assumed that the direction is genuinely created based on the realization that it is the accompaniment of two spirits grounded in a sense of equality and respect. The sense of equality and respect for each other is explicitly incarnated when the assumption is clearly stated that any characteristics, perceptions, values, beliefs, and practices exhibited in direction communication is dominated by culture. Ethnicity, gender, religion, family background, school, and occupation all belong to the co-culture.

³²² Cleo Molina and Hutch Haney, "Using the Concept of 'Co-cultures' in Supervision," in *Supervision of Spiritual Direction: Engaging in Holy Mystery*, ed. Mary Rose Bumpus and Rebecca B. Langer (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2006), 147-63.

The concept and practice of 'co-culture' has not yet paid attention to the inevitable clashes between the different values of cultural systems except to identify the similarities as well as differences. When some core values, despite the differences among cultures, are commonly shared, this enhances the common ground for understanding each other. That is, identifying core values allows directors or supervisors to further understand possible internal conflicts as well as insight into how their spirituality has been shaped.

Active embracing of cultural elements in the discerned choice would enhance the possibility of its being utilized in the multicultural context. As explored, the discerned choice inherently investigates the multilayered factors perceived in the human experience, especially those affected by interaction with the cultural context. So this leads directors or supervisors to use the all-dimensional framework to assist a directee or director to be aware of the holistic features of discerning the will of God in a given situation.

A spiritual direction session was held with a married couple, Glenn and Sarah. Glenn grew up in America from birth, so he identifies himself as American. Sarah is a first-generation Korean American, having grown up and being socialized as Korean until marrying Glenn. The following direction session illustrates a process for discovering how the intrinsic conflict or misunderstanding in the relationship originates in the cultural values. The main locus of their tension concerns the way to raise and educate their daughter, Susan. Sarah frequently expresses her complaints about the way Glenn treats Susan. Sarah is concerned about the possibility that Glenn's educational style is spoiling their only daughter because of his favoring American style and culture. She was raised and convinced by her cultural background that a child should be disciplined in the family, which would prepare Susan sufficiently to accomplish her goals in the society. Significantly enough, the direction session helped her to explore how her culturally

different education style plays a critical role in eliciting her inner sense of inferiority to her husband.

Meanwhile, Glenn has not been aware of the depth of Sarah's agony about the educational style, including her sense of inferiority. This uncovered observation prompted the director to identify how much cultural elements have been embedded in their lifestyle and value systems that unconsciously affect their marital relationship and family dynamics. With the spiritual director consciously using the concept of 'co-culture,' the couple was guided to cultivate equality and respect for their different cultural backgrounds and experiences. And, the holistic and simultaneous discerned choice process assisted them in making their decision and choice of educational style with cultural awareness.

After being prepared by indifference, it was introduced to them that the will of God is not confined in one specific form of culture, but rather that all cultural forms could be vessels for containing the will of God, without any sense of superior and inferior or hierarchical or patriarchal associations. Eliminating the hindrance of cultural assumptions initiated a genuine exploration of the four arenas and three dimension, the spiritual journey to the Holy Mystery in their life and family relationship. It gave them the crucial opportunity to understand profoundly where their misunderstanding and misinterpretation came from and to enhance their communication skills.

One of the primary topics for the discerned choice for this couple is the way in which they will educate Susan in their family. An all-embracing exploration of the discerned choice (holistic and simultaneous) gave them a balanced view of each culture (communal), so that rather than picking up one cultural educational style, they decided to focus more on developing communication skills (process) to enable them to respond spontaneously to each topic and issue

regarding Susan.

Pastoral Leadership

Spiritual discernment as one of the core values or characteristics in Christian pastoral leadership is being increasingly emphasized. Campbell and Dreitcer claim that the practice of discernment is essential spiritual formation for those who desire to be a Christian pastoral leader because it equips the ministers or pastors with the spiritual disposition to respond as fully as possible to God's longing for each of us to become a human being, fully alive in endowed ministry. But it also allows them to seek to uncover their truest and most profound longing, which touches God's longing for the members and the leaders.³²³

This research corroborates Ruth Barton's claim that the Christian church or organization should move from being a decision-making group to a discernment community.³²⁴ She remarks that "many of us have been taught that leadership is having the answer, and we come into meetings we are leading prepared to bestow that wisdom on our trusty followers; we might ask God for wisdom in a prayer that sounds very spiritual, but the truth is, there isn't much room for God to do or say anything other than what we already have in mind."³²⁵ The deliberate endeavor of a church or ministerial leadership to find the right answer should be followed by the discerned choice to make sure that the decision and choice have followed God's will for the community or organization.

A senior pastor in a local church came into a spiritual direction session with a critical

³²³ Ben Campbell and Andrew Dreitcer, *Beyond the Ordinary: Spirituality for Church Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 101.

³²⁴ Ruth H. Barton, *Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012).

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 194.

question: Should he would stay longer in his church or leave it as soon as possible, given the turmoil of the situation? When or how would he execute the critical decision that would have an enormous effect on the church members? The spiritual director had to acknowledge that answering these questions is the critical process for discovering his life vocation. After describing the critical conflict between the session members and him, the directee vented his feelings of discouragement, anger, and anxiety related to these relationships and ministry. He was almost convinced that his resignation and separation from being the senior pastor would be the only solution at that point.

The spiritual journey toward the Holy Mystery in his life is believed to be firmly related to his life vocation. The directee was invited to engage in imaginative contemplation following the biblical accounts of Jesus' journey in the mortal world, including the passion and crucifixion. This offered the first pivotal moment to him in his vocation and his association with the current ministry setting. With a sense of humility, he identified his impatience and uncontrolled impulses. The subsequent confession was addressed and a new desire sprouted: the desire to forgive and be forgiven, no matter what the consequences would be. This indicated from the directee's view the fruit of indifference or spiritual freedom.

The spiritual director introduced this pastor to the formulation of the discerned choice, with the four arenas and three dimensions related to the Holy Mystery. The process feature of spiritual discernment toward the will of God also reoriented his pastoral leadership formation as well as his attitudes to the church members. The new spiritual perception, comprehensive investigation, and data collection enlightened his views on the hidden members within the church and neglected virtues under his unhealthy leadership style (holistic). Most significantly, he expressed in a direction session that his emphasis upon following the divine word and the Bible

had a strong tendency to confine or trap him and his members into legalism so that all leadership members were tempted to judge and criticize each other. He also felt regretful of his intrapersonal distortion in pursuing authoritarian leadership (interpersonal) in the name of God. The sacrificed or marginalized members, or those wounded and hurt by the spiritual formation, were identified by the directee, and he began expressing his apologies toward them (simultaneous and spontaneous). Next, the directee called the session members in his church and invited them to implant the communal discernment process within their decision and choice-making progress so that they cultivated clarity, fairness, equality, and respect for each other.

In his most recent direction session, the directee shared his inner joy flowing from his spiritual freedom. He used to be anxious about how to stay in the church as a senior pastor, about how to control the session, about ways to increase his influence upon the whole church, and about how to succeed in his pastoral ministry by increasing the number of members. However, he noticed that the discerned choice he made had restored the peace and joy of his pastoral ministry. He began to firmly believe that the discerned choice is a relevant and appropriate leadership tool within the church ministry or Christian organization. It reorients and grounds people in the center of the Holy Mystery, which supplies them with freedom, peace, and joy, in his experience not only the church leadership, but also himself.

Christian Moral Consciousness

Making a moral or ethical choice is identified as a critical aspect of the Christian vocation, since being called a Christian implies moral responsibility and ethical accountability not only in the personal sphere, but also in the interpersonal and social arenas. It is clear that we live in a world that is complicated, interwoven with sometimes opposing value systems. In our

culture, many feel that the rapid development of science and technology is raising new ethical dilemmas for us that we are not prepared to face. For instance, pornography has found its way onto our children's computers, and email needs to be monitored to detect fraud and marketing abuses. The intricate topics of the abortion of fetuses and the women's rights movement have recurred as significant issues in the last presidential election. A recent challenge is advances in biogenetic technology, which are raising fundamental questions about the human species, the organs, the fetus, etc. In our noble vocation as Christians, how should we make moral or ethical choices in these subtle situations? How do we know if we have made the correct choice, integrated with our Christian faith?

It is inappropriate to engage here with these questions, since this research has exclusively engaged with the spiritual formation of the discerned choice. It is undeniable, however, that the Christian choice cannot but relate implicitly or explicitly with moral issues, because the choice is in some ways the embodiment of certain moral or ethical values. Then, what is the implication of the discerned choice in the moral and ethical aspects of the Christian choice? Despite its lack of direct influence on the moral enhancement or common good, the spiritual formulation of the discerned choice in this study can benefit from cultivating and nurturing the consciousness, which is a significant resource for Christian morality and ethics. The conceptualization by Richard Gula is immensely helpful for this argument; "conscience is the whole person's commitment to values and the judgment one makes in light of that commitment of how one ought to be and what one out to do or not do."³²⁶

Instead of categorizing it as individual freedom from authority, Gula's notion appeals to the whole engagement of a person to moral conscience. Choice that involves an act of conscience

³²⁶ Richard Gula, S.S., *Moral Discernment* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 18.

includes one's whole self with it, morally, cognitively, affectively, and spiritually. He delineates that to follow one's conscience is to answer to the call of God one hears from within the depths of one's own person, since in consciousness we meet God's Spirit leading us.³²⁷ Therefore, Christians equipped with the proper conscience formation answer not only the practical moral question, "What ought I to do?" but also the pre-moral or spiritual question, "What sort of person ought I to become?" The aim of forming conscience is not simply to inquire about the right thing to do by gathering information and thinking it over; it must also include the fuller development of a person's moral character and spiritual formation. Here is the locus where the discerned choice could be facilitated to cultivate and enhance the conscience for moral or ethical choices.

The holistic dimension and simultaneous features of the discerned choice process not only involve gathering in-depth information or data, but also lead to a new desire to restore the distorted human nature and discerning capacity. As theological anthropology has explored, the formulation of the discerned choice intends fundamentally to heal and restore the image of God within the human nature and capacity. Desire for change through the discerned choice is not about improving or obtaining the techniques or skills toward the will of God, but more about the restoration of the *imago dei*, a created being like God, and ultimately restoration of the relationship with God. This process implicitly includes the human conscience. As the discerned choice is formulated into the new desire of human nature, the conscience also undergoes distillation or purification sufficient to illuminate or contain the will or desire of God. Restoring the image of God means not only discerning the leading of the Holy Mystery, but also the distilling of the moral consciousness, which results in embodying the will of God in the moral choice-making context. Therefore, the discerning being commits to restoring the conscience from being distorted by the selfish or self-oriented disposition or inclination, to conform it the

³²⁷ Gula, 20-21.

conscience of Jesus.

The case of Eun-Ji is applicable in this ethical implication of abortion. The choice she faced is moral as well as spiritual—whether she would give birth to the baby conceived from an undesirable relationship. She was told to have an abortion by her parents and her ex-boyfriend. Her discerned choice process, however, initiated a distilling or cultivating of the inner sense of her conscience toward the baby conceived. This had her move from the practical moral questions about the dilemmas between her life-long freedom and the life dignity of the unborn baby, to the spiritual questions about what kind of person she ought to become. Other questions included, what sort of relationship ought I as mother construct with the baby? What kinds of virtues or values could the Lord teach me in this life-changing situation? The distilled or purified conscience elicited qualitatively different questions and answers to her discerned choice. The choice Eun-Ji made came out of her discernment process and her moral conscience, which was cultivated by the discernment. It ended up integrating her faith with her life.

Conclusion

The Experience Circle assists in this argument for comprehensiveness in practicing discernment based upon the diversity of the human experience. It resonates with the primary slogan of the spirituality of Ignatius of Loyola, which is “finding God in all things.”³²⁸ But it also corresponds to the ultimate goal of the spiritual practices, to enhance “the intimate knowledge of our Lord, who has become incarnate for me, that I may love him more and follow him more

³²⁸ This text is from one of the prayer methods in the *Spiritual Exercises*, the *Examination of Conscience* [24]. The core spirituality in the Ignatian tradition however is not confined to a form of prayer, but is embedded in all aspects of Ignatian spirituality. See David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear: An Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), Introduction.

closely.”³²⁹ The Experience Circle sheds remarkable light upon the simultaneous and spontaneous features of divine revelation, in which the multifaceted or holistic discernment is critically required in the intrapersonal, interpersonal, social, and nature arenas. This comprehensive feature demands serious consideration of the context and further of the culture, the overarching sphere of human experience. It strengthens my research topic, the necessity for different frameworks of spiritual discernment and choice depending upon the cultural context.

The critically distinctive features of the Social Discernment Cycle as a discernment method are as follows. First, the SDC emphasizes an enduring process and openness. Even if the contemplative response is embodied by a certain action in the context, it is still considered as tentative and temporary. Second, the SDC as strategy and method asks the practitioner for consistent reflection about spiritual freedom within his or her intrapersonal or psychological aspects. This is interrelated with the first feature, since spiritual freedom stems genuinely from the spiritual awareness that the whole of reality is opening to God. Ultimately, initiative in the whole world belongs to God, and the vocational task for the human being is to make a conscious choice toward openness instead of control over the situation by discerning tactically but freely the movements or will of God.

What will be the contribution and benefit of the Social Discernment Cycle? The most distinctive contribution is grounded in the way in which the deliberately systemic instrument applies the profound wisdom of discernment in the Christian spiritual tradition to our contemporary context, in which collective, social, complex systems and structures are interwoven in our individual lives. It helps us to rediscover the value of spiritual discernment in our current situation. This leads to the second benefit of the SDC, which is that the process leads us to pay attention to the ordinary structural existence in which we live. In terms of the method,

³²⁹ *Spiritual Exercises*, no. 104.



SDC equips us with “small, tactical, pragmatic, dialogic and consent-building”³³⁰ discernment, which is relevant to our postmodern, complex, and multi-layered world. Third, the SDC facilitates social analysis and theological reflection in nature so that it empowers discernment to address complex systems and institutions with the help of various perspectives and theoretical instruments.

Limitations of the SDC are also present. According to Liebert, the SDC relies upon one’s capacity to theologize one’s contextual experiences. Without proper engagement with theological reflection on the context or case, the process and outcomes of the SDC could readily be shallow. Secondly, the SDC is a long and complex procedure. This can be discouraging, because it demands sufficient patience and deliberation to engage in the entire four-fold process. Avoiding the drop in the middle, the frequent check of the current positioning or situation in the SDC procedure should deliberately be made. Third, introducing or teaching the SDC to individuals or a community requires the teaching to be accompanied by spiritual practice. Just passing out a booklet or pamphlet to introduce the SDC is unlikely to assist people in access the profundity of the process created from direct experiences. Finally, because it is a cycle, the discernor may be tempted to take a shortcut or skip one or more of the phases. The fact that each phase and step provides a constitutive and essential part of the transformative dynamic must be grounded in the belief that the crucial moment of the contemplative openness to being transformed comes only from within by God’s grace.

I have described the Experience Circle and the Social Discernment Circle, the two constructive pillars for the discerned choice. These will play the fundamental role in constructing the theoretical foundation of the discerned choice. The authentic or genuine choice made by Christians should be engaged in not only with the discipline of discernment, but also with the

³³⁰ Liebert, "Discernment for Our Times," 351.

profound awareness of the cultural aspects of the lived experience. This pioneering and experimental study query explored the pioneering and experimental implications of the discerned choice in the East Asian Christian Context, and proposed the discerned choice as the integrating strategy for the spiritual formation in this cultural context.

This project endeavored to demonstrate the main features of discerned choice as holistic, spontaneous, simultaneous, process and communal. And it also constructed practical method of the Cycle of discerned choice with seven steps in order to cultivate its practicality and applicability in diverse contexts as Christian spiritual formation. This project has demonstrated that taking the East Asian sensibility into serious consideration illuminates cultural dimensions within the discernment process that are operative in all contexts.

The integration of faith can be articulated as the spiritual endeavor to increase coherence or consistency of our belief into all aspects of lives. This is critical for enhancing the vitality of human lives. This thesis project has attempted to prove that the holistic discerned choice process can be a decisive tool for integrating Christian spirituality in the East Asian cultural context. It requires a considerable examination of the cultural, religious, and ideological background underlying the East Asian choice. The two building blocks of the discerned choice—the Experience Circle and the Social Discernment Cycle—verify that acknowledging the cultural aspects affecting the choice is important in constructing the theoretical framework of the discerned choice. That is, cultural aspects in the discerned choice should not be regarded as a hindrance in discriminating the will of God in any given context. Rather, comprehensively embracing and regarding the cultural context as a constructive factor in the Cycle of Discerned Choice makes the discernment authentic and genuine. The Cycle of Discerned Choice is introduced as an integrative and comprehensive tool for spiritual formation in the practice of

Christian discernment. Its seven steps incorporate not only the Experience Circle and Social Discernment Cycle, but also the all-embracing components that are culturally constructed in discerning God's will under the primary slogan of Christian discernment, "finding God in all things." This theoretical construction invites us to acknowledge the intercultural spirituality within East Asian Christianity and its spiritual formation. Therefore, the cultural elements that affect the discernment and choice making should be constructive and reciprocal elements in East Asian Christian spiritual formation; they should not be neglected or dismissed. It is constitutive in spiritual discernment.

Conclusion

This project was created as a practical theological research enterprise that primarily concerns the integration of faith with lived experiences. The academic purpose is closely related to two concepts: Christian spirituality and East Asian culture. The project mainly takes into consideration a crucial question from the discipline of Christian spirituality, which is how the Christian classics or historical wisdom can be practically appropriated in the most relevant way to renew or enhance spiritual lived experiences in the contemporary context. As an academic partner of practical theology, Christian spirituality encourages practical theologians to unearth the historical heritage within Christian spiritual traditions, in addition to the Scripture. Appropriating spiritual values from the historical legacy can offer critical opportunities to transform the spiritual lives of contemporary Christians.

The cultural context of spiritual experiences is the second topic of this project. Human life is circumstanced by culture, and the lived experience is surrounded or constituted by the cultural context. The cultural anthropological framework of religion, such as that developed in Geertz's work, has not only inspired my engagement with culture as the most powerful constitutive component in human lived experience, but it has also encouraged me to embrace and accept my own personal and spiritual experiences as constitutive to my spiritual formation. Spiritual experiences are thought to be transcendent; this is the prevailing religious assumption in my cultural context, which is the East Asian or Korean context. On the basis of their dualistic worldview, Korean Christians, in my experience, tend not to take into account the cultural components of their spiritual experiences. But, I hope that this project will demonstrate how spiritual experiences are formed or shaped in relation to the cultural context and how the cultural

component has a constitutive influence on spiritual experiences. As practical theological research, this project has made an effort to embrace and integrate the Christian tradition with the cultural context, which not only enhances its spiritual relevancy but also offers a new framework for spiritual formation for a new Christian generation.

This project was originally intended to introduce the discerned choice as an aspect of spiritual formation for the East Asian/Korean Christian context. The practice of spiritual discernment in the Christian spiritual heritage is believed to be highly relevant, a “must-have” aspect of spiritual formation for Christians living in today’s postmodern, multifaceted society. It is commonly recognized that postmodern and multicultural perspectives have drastically challenged existing value systems and worldviews. This has accelerated fragmentation, decentralization, and dispersion in the lives of Christians. The inner desire of contemporary Christian to seek the sacred or mysterious sphere is, however, alive and well. Through examining and appreciating their experiences throughout the life circle, practitioners search for the meaning of life and an intimate relationship with the divine. There is growing personal and communal interest in the practice of spiritual discernment as a desired spiritual talent or religious virtue among the younger generations.

This academic project was therefore designed around the conviction that the discerned choice, a practice in Christian spiritual formation, is able to equip or train the next generation to engage in well-balanced or full-fledged spiritual practices in the contemporary religious or spiritual milieu. The cultural component is considered a spiritual vessel where the divine will or sacred messages may be contained. The discerned choice as described in this project is identified not only as a symbolic vehicle, but also as a practical tool for integrating Christian faith and lived experience in spirituality studies as well as in practical theological research. It represents a

convergence of two academic disciplines in the one topic.

As a practical research methodology, the Pastoral Circle has proved its structural effectiveness and academic relevancy in this project. Not only does it contain all the necessary aspects of a practical theological research framework, but it also incorporates critical academic methods. The careful design of the four steps that comprise the Pastoral Circle—description, social analysis, theological reflection, and pastoral response—satisfies the academic aims of practical theological study, but it also enhances the academic credibility and professional relevance of the methodology by integrating social science and theological insight. The most distinctive contribution of the Pastoral Circle as a research method is that it demands a careful description of the perceived phenomenon followed by a deliberate analysis. Thus, this project draws on three topics of study: sociocultural psychology, Neo-Confucianism, and the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola. Social descriptive analysis employing cross-sociocultural psychological methods and measurement tools reveals the psychological differences and cultural elements embedded in choice-making, as is evident when comparing the East Asian context with the Western context.

In the first chapter, after a detailed examination of the existing research, I describe the three constitutive characteristics of East Asian psychology: collectivism, an interdependent way of being, and naive dialectical thinking. In the second chapter, I investigate Neo-Confucian concepts of the cosmos, nature, the human being, and spiritual disciplines as part of an in-depth social analysis of the East Asian cultural context. This sheds light upon the religious and ideological fundamentals of the East Asian milieu, which are the intrinsic and foundational origins of the choice pattern in this context. The coined term “discerned choice” is constructed on the basis of the unique notion of the *Election* in the *Spiritual Exercises* written by Ignatius of

Loyola in the third chapter. As an aspect of theological reflection, the new concept of the choice offers insight into the ways in which a Christian choice may benefit from spiritual discernment through various forms of contemplative prayer and may be formulated in ways appropriate to the context of the choice making in real life.

The final chapter integrates and evaluates the stimulating and profound data derived from the contemporary sociocultural analysis of choice by the psychological sciences, the rigorous investigation of Neo-Confucianism as the philosophical and ideological foundation of East Asian culture, and the theological and spiritual insights related to the discerned choice from the field of Ignatian spirituality. Core features of the discerned choice in East Asian Christian spirituality are identified as holistic, spontaneous, and simultaneous, as an ongoing process, and as communal, by employing two theoretical methods, the Experience Circle and the Social Discernment Cycle. Significantly, this chapter discusses a new method of spiritual discernment, the seven-step Cycle of Discerned Choice, to be used in Christian spiritual formation in the postmodern and multicultural context.

I argue that the discerned choice as Christian spiritual formation is appropriately embodied in the integrating and complementary dynamics between the discernment process and the significant characteristics of the practitioner's cultural context. Taking the East Asian sensibility into serious consideration illuminates cultural dimensions within the discernment processes that are operative in all contexts. Taking one particular context, the East Asian culture, into account has led to the discovery of authentic features of the discernment process—it is holistic, spontaneous, simultaneous, a process, and communal. So, this increases its practical applicability and emphasizes the universal nature of the discerned choice in all contexts, including the Western and East Asian cultural contexts, and makes it a more intentional Christian

spiritual formation practice.

This dissertation contributes to the academic fields of practical theology and Christian spirituality in several ways. First, this project demonstrates a way in which practical theology and Christian spirituality studies can cooperate constructively and be integrated in academic study. This dispels concerns about the intrinsic tension or theoretical conflicts between these two academic fields; both have the potential to contribute to the renewal of Christian faith in contemporary society. Second, this project is an initial attempt to accommodate or adapt various forms of Western spiritual practices into the East Asian (or Korean) cultural context. This study offers an example of one way in which Christian spiritual practices can be adjusted in an appropriate way for the East Asian context. Third, one of the primary contributions of this research is that it identifies ways to adapt Christian discernment, as a spiritual practice, to the East Asian context. Fourth, Christian choice-making is introduced as a way to rediscover or reevaluate a spiritual practice, not only to deepen an individual's spiritual formation but also to renew or transform Christian spirituality in the East Asian context. Fifth, the four main characteristics of spiritual discernment are identified as its nature as holistic, spontaneous and simultaneous, a process, and communal. Sixth, the concept of the discerned choice is embodied by the practical and theoretical method of the Cycle of Discerned Choice, which increases its applicability to all cultural contexts. Last and foremost, this project is significant in that it addresses the cultural elements or aspects embedded within human nature, examining the role of cultural contexts in spiritual practices and spiritual formation.

Based upon the theoretical contributions of the project, it is clear that the discerned choice as a practice for spiritual formation in the Christian context is relevant and appropriate in East Asian countries—China, Japan, and Korea (and Vietnam, to some extent)—despite the fact

that this topic has been investigated mainly in the Korean context. At least three reasons support this theoretical supposition. First, the relevant sociocultural psychology data were collected by cross-cultural research methods, mostly between Europeans (or European Americans) and East Asians (Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Asian Americans, etc.), which elucidates the common features of cultural phenomena such as customs, social habits, cultural cognitions, value systems, social behaviors, etc. Second, Neo-Confucianism is still commonly believed to be the prominent ideology of the East Asian countries, and it has had an immense influence upon the living customs, cognitive frames of reference, and value systems of people from these countries. Third, the core features of the discerned choice and its practical implications are applicable and relevant not only to the East Asian context but also to the postmodern Western or Euro-American context. This is because the theoretical solidity and comprehensive characteristics of the discerned choice can enhance the integration and synthesis of Western Christian spirituality, which has been experiencing increasing cognitive and social fragmentation. The discerned choice is context-oriented, so it is able to be applied universally. Its core features are culturally bound. The East Asian practitioner making a discerned choice should enhance the cultivation of individualistic features and independent self, whereas the Westerner making a discerned choice should focus on adopting the insights of collectivistic and interdependent self-concepts.

I am aware of several possible limitations of this project. First, the essentialist aspect of the research scope seems somewhat inevitable within cross-cultural methodology since quantitative data recapitulate and compare salient characteristics within certain groups. The essentialist stance is highly likely to generate a dualistic understanding or misconception of each cultural group or context. For instance, in-group values seem to be disregarded in the choice-making procedure if the collectivistic or interdependent features are dismissed in the East Asian

context. That the discerned choice is holistic implies some transcendence of the strict frame of cross-cultural dichotomy. This is pursued beyond cultural boundaries not as an exclusive way, but as an all-embracing cultural component used in integrating ways. I am very much aware, however, that East Asians also have a tendency toward individualism and independent self-systems and Westerners also have a tendency toward collectivism and interdependence—it is not an either/or situation. In addition, this research takes into account the Ignatian school that argues convincingly that the primary goal of the *Spiritual Exercises* is “union with God,” not the election (discerned choice). I believe that these two different understandings are not contradictory and incompatible with each other but rather are in a mutually complementary relationship. Nevertheless, it is possible that viewing “union with God” as the primary goal would be a different but appropriate way to construct the core argument of this research.

I suggest several topics for future studies. First, the cultural differences and distinctiveness among East Asian cultural contexts could be actively embraced as the next step. Despite the cultural homogeneity among Chinese, Japanese, and Korean societies as identified by sociocultural psychological research, other academic disciplines, such as indigenous psychological research or anthropology, might identify cultural differences within the overall East Asian context. This could be taken into account in further studies in order to articulate the ways in which the discerned choice could be practiced and manifested in each cultural context. Second, it would be worthwhile to do additional research on the discerned choice in the Western Christian context. Even though the concept of the discerned choice arose out of the Western spiritual tradition, it has not been introduced as a spiritual formation practice to European Christian communities, nor has the practice been offered widely in Western religious groups.

While working on this project, I met a longtime friend from Korea who graduated from

seminary with me in 2005. In the United States, we have shared various aspects of our life journey together, ranging from facing academic challenges as international students and raising our children as Korean Americans and dealing with their cultural/national identity confusion to discussing our pastoral ministry and its intrinsic problems and envisioning our future ministry. While his wife was engaged in the spiritual direction program at San Francisco Theological Seminary through which she discerned her life vocation, we shared a delightfully life-giving experience through engaging in spiritual practices and spiritual direction together. But, about two years ago I learned that his wife had been diagnosed with breast cancer, and it has turned out to be very serious. She is a 40-year-old-mother of three sons (thirteen, ten, and six years old). During the last couple of years, she has been hospitalized numerous times for chemotherapy and radiation, going through the most harsh and painful time of her life—it has been total desolation!

In the middle of her medical treatment, she painfully but with delight confessed to myself and other friends that attending spiritual direction classes, doing meditation and contemplation, and being involved in a small group practicum have helped alleviate her pain and assisted her to manage her fear and terror. While going through her long fight for her life, she surprised me with her life-changing awakening or awareness she had through her life-threatening situation. She said that the choices that came out of her physical or material desires have been regrettable or disappointing, while the choices out her spiritual desires have never been disappointing—instead, they are life-giving choices. Without any knowledge of my academic topic, her confession strengthens my desire to discover the ultimate purpose of my academic journey. Her statement shapes the concluding remarks in my engagement with this topic. Her words represent the legitimate confessions of many Christians who are looking for the will of God in their lives here and now.

The discerned choice is a Christian spiritual formation practice for those who desire to cultivate an intimate relationship with God. The procedure of making a choice is considered a vehicle for coming closer to God as well as for enhancing spiritual awareness or discernment in the practitioner's spiritual life. The discerned choice changes the inmost desires of Christians from worldly or materialistic desires to sacred or holy desires. The discerned choice cultivates spiritual indifference or freedom, the most desirable fruit in spiritual practice, because it liberates the practitioner from self-centeredness or selfish desires. The discerned choice leads ultimately to more profound awareness and a deeper desire in relationship with God, which is an aim of the Christian spiritual tradition. Jesus' crucifixion can be recognized as the ultimate model of discerned choice by God the Trinity in that Jesus made the choice to be sacrificed as the salvific way for the world.

As a practical method for Christian spiritual formation, the discerned choice offers a specific and reliable tool for spiritual discernment practice in any given situation. It asks for deliberate engagement with the investigation of the inner self—spiritual work. It is designed to facilitate actively various aspects of human capacities such as cognition, affection, intuition, and imagination. It also requires the exploration of the given situation or cultural context as a constitutive sign from God, which enables the Christian to develop a holistic approach to the divine milieu that ranges from the unconscious, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social levels to nature and the cosmos. Practically, the discerned choice requires engaging in spiritual direction with a spiritual director or mentor so that the practitioner receives assistance with unperceived potential choices and spiritual insights in the discerning process. The method also encourages the recognition that the discerning process requires the active involvement of others, or communal engagement, even if one person is making the choice/decision. This communal or collective

aspect of the discerned choice is inspired by the Quaker spiritual practice of the Clearness Committee, which is intentionally designed for individual discernment with communal engagement. It acknowledges that the individual discernment process is enhanced in its spiritual legitimacy or relevancy by spiritual companionship on the ongoing journey.

I hope that the theological concepts, theoretical systems, critical features, and practical method of discerned choice described in this dissertation will facilitate Christian spiritual formation and will cultivate, renew, and transform the spiritual lives of East Asian Christians by enabling them to embrace their cultural experiences as constitutive components in discerning the will of God in any given situation. I hope this will lead them not only to discover their individual life vocation but also will enhance their spiritual sense of intimacy with God. I believe this project has the potential to convince Christians of the significance of discernment and spiritual choice in renewing or transforming their spirituality so that they will engage directly with the theories and methods of discerned choice in their spiritual practices. Furthermore, I also wish that the theoretical and practical relevancy of the discerned choice would be verified by its direct application and first-hand adaptation as a spiritual practice by Christian retreatants, directees, directors, ministers, and other practitioners, all of whom are the ultimate beneficiaries of Christian spiritual formation. As a practical theologian, Christian minister, and spiritual director, my academic and practical endeavor to develop the theories and method of the discerned choice will be ceaseless, as I believe it is my life vocation. My life journey with discerned choice is just beginning with the completion of this project.

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